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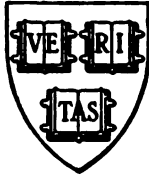
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THE SACRED CITY  
OF THE  
ETHIOPIANS

*By the same Author.*

**THE RUINED CITIES OF MASHONALAND:** being a Record of Excavation and Exploration in 1891. With a Chapter on the Orientation and Mensuration of the Temples, by R. M. W. SWAN. With Map, 13 Plates, and 104 Illustrations in the Text. Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d.

London: LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO.





SACRED PICTURE FROM THE CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, ADOUA—(*vide* p. 132).

# THE SACRED CITY OF AXUM OF THE ETHIOPIANS

BY  
THE  
CAPTAIN-GENERAL  
OF THE ARMY  
OF THE  
EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA  
AND  
GENERAL  
OF THE ARMY  
OF THE  
EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

BY  
J. HENRI DREYER, ESQ., M.A.,  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

WITH A CHAPTER BY THE REV. J. H. DREYER,  
ON THE INSCRIPTIONS FROM YEREA AND A SENEZ,  
AN APPENDIX ON THE MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF  
THE AMHARIC LANGUAGE, BY J. H. DREYER, M.D., M.P.

LONDON  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
AND NEW YORK, 15 EAST 57 STREET  
1895



THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, FROM THE  
FLOOD TO THE PRESENT

THE SACRED CITY  
OF THE  
ETHIOPIANS

BEING A RECORD OF

TRAVEL AND RESEARCH IN ABYSSINIA IN 1893

BY

J. THEODORE BENT, F.S.A., F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF 'THE RUINED CITIES OF MASHOMALAND' ETC.

WITH A CHAPTER BY PROF. H. D. MÜLLER  
ON THE INSCRIPTIONS FROM YEHA AND AKSUM, AND  
AN APPENDIX ON THE MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF THE  
ABYSSINIANS, BY J. G. GARSON, M.D., V.P.A.I.

LONDON  
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AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16<sup>th</sup> STREET

1893

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## PREFACE

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THE FOLLOWING PAGES stand as a record of a four months' journey, which my wife and I made in Abyssinia at the beginning of this year; Aksum, the sacred city of the Ethiopians, and the ancient capital of the country, being the object towards which our steps were directed.

Thanks to the kindly collaboration of Professor D. H. MÜLLER of Vienna, the archæological results prove of the highest interest, and present us with another chapter in the early history of what German writers speak of as proto-Arabian enterprise; a history, which research is only just now beginning to unfold, and which will, I feel confident, as discovery follows discovery, place before our view a vast, powerful, and commercial empire, almost outside the limits of the then known world, contemporaneous with the best days of Egypt, Phœnicia, Greece, and Rome—an empire which extended its discoveries to parts of the world which are now only being re-

discovered, and possessing a commerce which supplied the ancient world with its most valued luxuries—spices, rare woods, ivory, gold and precious stones. These products came not from Arabia itself, but were collected at various centres by the enterprise of the merchants of Sabæa.

The impressions of inscriptions which we took, and the photographs of the ruins, now place the Sabæans of Arabia by incontrovertible documentary evidence in the heart of Abyssinia as early as the 7th or 8th century B.C., whilst at the same time they show that paganism continued as the national religion down to a much later epoch than is supposed, and that the Judaic influence in that country and the early conversion to Christianity may be relegated to the chapter of myths, as far as this portion of Ethiopia is concerned.

I have endeavoured to set out our experiences in the country in as simple a narrative form as possible, giving special attention to the religious observances of the primitive church, which we came across on our way, and the manners and customs of everyday life.

Our most unbounded thanks are due to the Italian authorities in their Red Sea colony, picturesquely called '*Eritrea*' after the Erythræan Sea. Without their aid we should have experienced in-

surmountable difficulties in the present anarchical condition of the Abyssinian Empire, and without their prompt intervention, a fate, which has befallen so many European travellers who have penetrated into Ethiopia, might have been ours.

The illustrations in this volume are from photographs taken by my wife on the spot, from photographs of the objects we brought home, and which are now in the British Museum, and from sketches of my own, which appeared in the 'Illustrated London News.'

J. THEODORE BENT.

13 GREAT CUMBERLAND PLACE :  
*November 1893.*



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# THE SACRED CITY

## OF THE

# ETHIOPIANS

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### CHAPTER I

#### *ARRIVAL IN ETHIOPIA*

OUR object in visiting Abyssinia was primarily archæological—to study what is left of Aksum, the ancient capital of Ethiopia, and still the centre of religious feeling throughout the realms of the Ethiopian emperor. We had, however, several objects of subsidiary interest in view; a study of the Abyssinian people themselves, their quaint Christianity, their customs, and their surroundings, would naturally be to us of deep interest; then, again, in the coming partition of Africa, Abyssinia will naturally play an important part. To what European power will the ancient empire of Ethiopia eventually belong? Will the Italians succeed in extending the firm footing they have gained on the Red Sea? or will the French put in a claim from the side of

Obock? Problems such as these are of the highest interest for those of us who try to live in the future as well as the past.

The difficulty which was to follow us during the whole of our Abyssinian tour confronted us before even we set foot on shore at Massowah. Whilst on the steamer we heard that hostilities had broken out again between the two rival chiefs in Tigrè, the district which we wished to visit, and that for the present the country was closed to Europeans. The Italian governor, Colonel Barattiere, paid us a visit on board, and with him we seriously discussed the advisability of abandoning altogether our prospective journey; but he advised us to adhere to our plans to spend a few weeks in the Italian colony, which includes the Abyssinian districts of Hamasen and Okule Kasai, where Abyssinian life and character could be studied with quite as much profit, and infinitely more safety, than in the realms of King Menelek; and then, if matters in Tigrè took a more favourable turn, we could proceed to cross the frontier to Adoua and Aksum, the goal of our desires.

This struggle between Ras Alula and Ras Mangashah for the lordship of Tigrè will have to be frequently alluded to in these pages; consequently, it will be as well to explain in a few words the condition of Abyssinian politics which has led to this dispute. During the reign of the Emperor John, whom our expedition of 1868 placed on the Abyssinian throne, Alula, a man of no royal birth, but great ambition, made himself conspicuous for his bravery and his

victories ; he conquered the Dervishes who threatened Abyssinia on the north ; he fought hard against the Italian occupation of the northern portion of the country ; he was cruel and treacherous, but, being brave and successful, was beloved by all.

During the lifetime of the Emperor John, Alula was Viceroy of Tigrè, and obtained the rank of Ras, or prince, though he was never crowned king. The Emperor Menelek II., however, when he succeeded



ABYSSINIAN GIRL

to the empire, was jealous of the almost independent power possessed by this Ras ; he summoned him to resign, and appointed Ras Mangashah, a son of the Emperor John, as his successor as Viceroy of Tigrè, and intended eventually to bestow on him the vacant crown. Naturally, Alula resented the appointment of a much younger man over him, and, feeling himself strong in the number of his friends, at once took up arms, retired to his mountain in Tembien, and



was prepared to offer every resistance to the usurpation of his power. The Italians, of course, sided with the nominee of the Emperor Menelek against their old enemy, Ras Alula. This naturally introduced a new element into Abyssinian politics. The pages of Abyssinian history are full of struggles similar to that which is now going on between Ras Alula and Ras Mangashah, but this is the first time that a European power has had anything to say to them, and the results will be interesting. Unfortunately, Italy is not strong enough or rich enough to put her foot down and dictate terms; if she were, there could be no question about the ultimate submission of Abyssinia to Italian rule. She has spent an enormous sum of money and many lives in the consolidation of her power in the provinces allotted to her, and as at present there are no tangible returns for this outlay the home government is naturally chary of interfering in the present crisis.

Such was the state of Abyssinian politics when we landed on January 2, 1893, at Massowah.

The Italians are fond of comparing Massowah to Venice, and hope to make her ere long the Queen of the Red Sea. The town is built on three coral islets close to the mainland, Massowah, Taulud, and Sheikh Seid. During late years a considerable number of Italian buildings have arisen amongst the ruins of the Egyptian occupation; the white Egyptian palace, built by the unfortunate Arakel Pasha, who fell at Gudda Guddi, fighting against the Abyssinians on December 16, 1875, is now the residence of the

Italian governor; adjoining it is a very pretty military club with an open-air theatre; water surrounds you on every side, and steamy, enervating heat makes life a burden to those who have just come from more bracing climes; yet, strange to say, Massowah is by no means unhealthy; fevers are rare; bugs, fleas, and other vermin—alas! too common on the high plateau—are unknown here; there is no vegetation to decay and cause malaria, and doubtless the steamy atmosphere is greatly impregnated with salt, which acts as an antiseptic to germs which would otherwise produce epidemics. The only difficulty with which the Italian officers have to contend is debility and anæmia, which is at once removed by a residence of a few weeks on the high plateau, or a few months' leave in Europe; in fact, they say that Massowah is healthier than many of their military stations at home.

If Massowah is infinitely inferior to Venice in its internal appearance, it is infinitely more beautiful in its surroundings. The mighty Abyssinian mountains approach quite close to the coast-line at this point, and form a stupendous and lovely background to the little town; quaint Arab dhows are moored to its quays; half-naked natives from all sorts and conditions of tribes from the interior give an air of wildness to its narrow streets and dirty bazaars and naturally excite the interest of those about to proceed inland. The sea, as seen from the causeway which joins the island of Massowah to that of Taulud, is alive with small fish of rare forms and colours,

which black urchins catch all day long from the quay, ever and anon plunging themselves into the clear water, despite the fact that from time to time a shark will make a selection from amongst them for its meal. Curious fishermen on four planks tied together, forming a sort of unstable raft, ply hither and thither amongst the ships selling their wares ; and if you plunge into the dark streets you come across many an interesting fragment of Egyptian architecture, such as windows with *Mushrabiah*, tombs of saints, and so forth, relics of the Egyptian occupation of this place before the Italians established themselves here seven years ago.

We spent five days at Massowah to purchase mules and collect our staff of men for the interior ; our Greek servant, Manthaios, who had already made nine journeys with us, was to be our right-hand man. As interpreter we obtained the admirable services of an Abyssinian rejoicing in the name of Werka Terha, who had spent several years at Athens, and spoke Greek fluently. He told us that in Greece he had always been called Marko, and as Greek was to be the language of communication in our domestic department, we soon abandoned our efforts to call him by his more high-sounding name, and knew him as Marko. As to our muleteers, they formed a heterogeneous mass of idle, troublesome fellows, in whom we could get up little or no interest, and at the end of our time we parted much more regretfully with our mules than with them. Owing to the uncertainty of our being able to enter Abyssinia just

then, we left a sum of money with Cavaliere Castellani, the governor's secretary, and son of the Signor Castellani, of British Museum fame, who kindly undertook to forward us the necessary presents for the Abyssinian chiefs if occasion should require.

The Italians have lately run a light line of rails for 27 kilometres in the direction of the mountains, which is an inestimable boon to the traveller into the interior. That dreadful strip of country known as the Samhar, on the horrors of which previous travellers have loved to dwell, we crossed in the train. We hurried past Otumlo, a village in a sea of sand, a collection of round huts inhabited by a tribe of Shohos, made of every imaginable scrap of rubbish, old oil tins, mats, and rags; past Moncullo with the Swedish mission-house standing out conspicuously amongst a similar collection of huts; past low, undulating hills covered with wait-a-bit thorn clinging to arid and sterile rocks; past Dogali, celebrated in Italian annals as the scene of their hard-won victory over Ras Alula, who had descended from his mountain fastnesses to give them battle there and drive them into the sea. The Italians here lost 500 men, to whom monuments are erected on an adjoining hill, whereas Ras Alula lost his thousands, and retired vanquished across the Mareb. Finally, the train deposited us and our baggage at Sahati, the terminus of the little line at the foot of the Abyssinian mountains. At Sahati we were hospitably entertained by the Italian officers, as, indeed, we were at all their forts in the

colony, and given a delightfully cool abode made of matting, through which fresh breezes struggled, to which we had been strangers during our stay at Massowah.

As I sat next morning making a sketch of the massive range before us, with the Italian casino in the foreground, I could not help pondering over the past, present, and future of Ethiopia. There it really was



ITALIAN CASINO AT BAHARI

at the top of that gigantic wall which has so effectually shut it off for all generations from intercourse with the outer world. Here, as Gibbon says, 'the Ethiopians had slept for near a thousand years, forgetful of the world by whom they were forgotten.' Its past for us is one mass of legend concerning bygone grandeur almost impossible for us to unravel; its present is one of absolute misery and degradation;

its future depends entirely on external circumstances and into whose hands it will eventually fall.

It is curious that, in ages far gone by, Greek influence was here paramount; from the days of the Ptolemies to the days of the Alexandrian monks, who converted it to Christianity, Greek was the only influence from without; then came the thousand years of which Gibbon speaks, and a Latin influence fell upon Ethiopia. The Portuguese travelled through it, almost converted it, and then had to abandon it. The Portuguese Alvarez, in 1520, was the first to leave a reliable account of his travels, to which work we shall have constant occasion to refer in these pages. Now, again, another Latin influence in the shape of the Italians is upon it, and the success of their enterprise is still problematical.

There stood before me the home of the mystic Prester John, or rather the man whom the Portuguese believed to be Prester John, the home of a Christian Church which had separated itself from the rest of the world after the Council of Chalcedon, and was Christian still. There were the valleys which had inspired Dr. Johnson with his story of Rasselas; for, as Lord Stanley of Alderley points out in his preface to his translation of Alvarez, Dr. Johnson borrowed largely from the descriptions of Alvarez, and Dr. Johnson had once made 5*l.* by translating the travels of Father Lobo in Abyssinia, and was therefore well up in Abyssinian lore. Furthermore, it appears to me that not only did Dr. Johnson borrow his descriptions from this source, but also the name of his hero,

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for Ras Sela, half-brother of the emperor, figures largely in all the Portuguese annals. Thoughts such as these ran through my mind as we contemplated the task before us from Sahati.



FITAUBARI (GENERAL) JOHN

The mules and most of the servants had travelled on foot.

A short ride from Sahati to Sabargouma was all we accomplished on the first day of our journey; the mules were troublesome to load, it was exceedingly hot, and we were all thoroughly tired when,

after a three hours' ride over a succession of little plains, one higher than the other, we reached Sabargouma. On our way we met a cavalcade going in the direction of Massowah, headed by a person who interested us much; his name is Fitaurari (General) John, a fine, handsome man, though dark, towering several inches above his Abyssinian fellow-countrymen; his horse-trappings were of silver; his handsome skin cloak at once showed him to be a man of distinction. To our surprise, he addressed to us a few words of English, and we learnt that his father was a European gentleman, who had passed some time in Abyssinia something like fifty years ago. General John is a great man in Tigre, an ardent supporter of Ras Mangashah, and was now on his way to Massowah on an embassy from the Ras to the governor of the 'Colonia Eritrea.'

In the neighbourhood of Sabargouma is a village of Abyssinians who have fled from the high plateau to escape from the famine and misery which has ruined the country during late years. Formerly very few Abyssinians were to be seen off the high plateau; now there are many encampments of them on the lower ground near Massowah. Civil war, famine, and an epidemic of cholera have, within the last decade, played fearful havoc in Abyssinia; villages are abandoned, the land is going out of cultivation, and the wretched survivors betake themselves to the lowlands in the hope of finding employment and some means of subsistence. It is scarcely possible to realise, without visiting the country, the abject misery



and wretchedness which has fallen upon the Ethiopian empire during late years. Besides internal troubles, they have to contend with Dervish raids from the north, Galla raids from the south; bands of robbers haunt all their mountains. Gondar, which was the capital of the country a few years ago, with forty-three churches, palaces built by the Portuguese, and every element of prosperity about it, is now almost a desert, having been raided three times by the Dervishes. The Emperor Menelek lives in Shoa, powerless and inert. Tigre is convulsed with the quarrels of the rival chiefs, and it would seem, if help in some form or another does not soon come, the great plateau of Ethiopia will become practically depopulated.

From Sabargouma the real ascent of the mountains begins. The Italians have made a good road, which winds up the hill sides, and by this time will be finished as far as Asmara; consequently, the journey was so far quite easy. The ascent to Ghinda is between two and three thousand feet, through rich vegetation, reminding one of the southern slopes of the Caucasus. Beneath the trees were flowering rich-coloured gladioli, long hanging orchids, and many plants known to us only in conservatories. Unfortunately, rain fell heavily, and before we reached Ghinda we were completely wet through. Ghinda is a perfect paradise, a valley placed between the two seasons which prevail in this part of the world. When it is wet along the coast line it is fine on the high plateau, and when it rains on the high plateau it is fine on the coast line; con-

sequently, the valleys leading up to the mountains come in for a share of both rains, and luxuriate accordingly in rich fertility.

On the following day we proceeded to Asmara, up a narrow valley by the old road, for the new one winds so much that it would have taken us twice as long. It was in every respect a splendid ride, and for the first few hours we enjoyed brilliant sunshine and



IN A QUOLQUOL FOREST

glimpses of glorious scenery. Here begin the quol-quol forests, that weird *Euphorbia candelabrum* which reminds one forcibly of the seven-branched candlesticks as depicted in illustrated Bibles.

We had made the acquaintance of this tree in Mashonaland, and here I may state how constantly we were reminded of the high plateau of Southern Africa in our wanderings over the high plateau of Ethiopia. The flora seems to me to be strikingly

coincident, the *Euphorbia candelabrum*, the gigantic baobab, the sugar plant (*Protea melliflora*), the *Cucumis metuliferus*, with its orange-red edible fruit, and an endless string of old acquaintances we here met again, including thorny trees of all sorts. The climate, too, is also similar; though Abyssinia is much more elevated than Mashonaland, yet it is nearer the equator; the rains for three or four months, and the long period of drought are practically the same; and there are, too, so many striking points of similarity in the habits and customs of the inhabitants, that they cannot all be accidental, but point either to a common origin or a common influence. For example, in both countries we have the wooden pillows for head rests, the same game is played with a series of holes, in which they move pebbles to and fro with a puzzling but similar regularity; the same millet-meal beer is drunk in both countries; iron is smelted in both countries after a similar fashion, with two goat-skins inflated by the hand, and blowing the embers with clay blow-pipes of similar construction. In the portion of these pages devoted to archæology we shall, I think, from epigraphy and ancient remains, be able to establish an Arabian origin for the Ethiopians.<sup>1</sup> One cannot fail, therefore, to see that the same in-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Murray, in his commentary on *Bruce's Travels*, expresses it as his opinion that the Ethiopians were of Arabian origin, but Mr. Salt differs from him. The numerous Himyaritic and early Arabian inscriptions which we have found, Himyaritic buildings, &c., will set this question at rest for ever, and establish the fact that the Ethiopians can trace their origin as well as their written script from Arabia Felix.

fluence has been at work all down the east coast of Africa, and that the Arabians have been the people whose influence has had a kindred effect on the peoples so far apart as Ethiopia is from Mashonaland in times gone by.

Midday found us again in the mist and rain, which at this season of the year comes on with painful regularity. We lunched in the mist, amidst a wood of quolquol trees, some reaching to the height of sixty feet and stretching out their weird arms in every direction; it is an uncanny-looking tree, and exudes a poisonous milky gum which is exceedingly dangerous. The Italians, in making their roads, have had much difficulty with these trees; and the milk from it, if it squirts into the eyes when the tree is cut, produces blindness. An enterprising Greek of Massowah has tried to utilise the quolquol gum for commercial purposes, but I hear with no great success; it is too spongy. The natives use this tree universally for building huts and roofing their houses. When barked and dried, it becomes exceedingly hard and does not rot; moreover, it is very straight and light, and makes admirable centre poles for their round *toukuls*.

Pursuing our way in the mist up a narrow gorge, we reached an exceedingly steep ascent, up which we struggled for two hours or more, dodging through a caravan of camels, and then suddenly, as if by magic, we stepped out of the mist and drizzle into brilliant sunshine as we got near Asmara and the edge of the high plateau.

The effect was one of the most curious I have ever witnessed ; below was a sea of crumpled clouds extending as far as the eye could reach, out of which peered high mountain peaks like islands in a sea of cotton wool ; above us was the clearest of blue skies and a burning sun. We had literally stepped at one moment out of the winter of the coast line into the summer of the high plateau, and we were, as the aneroid told us, close upon 7,000 feet above the level of the sea.

At this point, the edge of the high plateau, the *ciglione* or eyebrow, as the Italians call it, is most marked, running in a direct line north and south as far as one could see. After the toilsome ascent has been made, exceedingly abrupt and steep, your eyes wander over the vast, almost unbroken, plain of the high plateau of Ethiopia. This plain is broken at long intervals by deep river valleys, such as the Mareb and the Tacazzeh, and occasionally, as at Adoua and the range of Semyen, which reaches an elevation of 15,000 feet, ambitious peaks like dolomites soar still higher and break the monotony of this high plateau ; but the greater part of Ethiopia consists of a flat or undulating plain at a uniform elevation of from six to seven thousand feet above the level of the sea.

During our stay at Asmara, which extended over three weeks, we noticed the greatest regularity of climate. In the early mornings everything was clear and bright ; as the day advanced the clouds would gather from the sea and gradually roll up the moun-

tain sides, enveloping the lowlands and the valleys in a dense mist; occasionally, towards sundown, this mist would roll over the edge and envelop a little of the high plateau in its clammy folds, but it quickly dispersed as the sun went down, and the morning would again break forth lovely and bright, with a slight hoar frost over the ground.

Nothing can be more health-giving and invigorating than the air of the high plateau of Abyssinia during the dry season; in fact, I believe that even during the rains there is little or no fever, though the country is next to impassable with swamps and mud. At this season of the year the deep valleys are said to be unhealthy and feverish, though the evidence on this point is conflicting, and I imagine that, even during the rains, these deep valleys may be crossed with impunity if care is taken not to sleep near the river beds.

## CHAPTER II

## STAY AT ASMARA

ASMARA is one of the most important places in the Italian Red Sea colony—the basis, in fact, of all their operations on the high plateau. Where once stood a village and church called Betmariam, they have established a strong fortress; they have also erected numerous buildings for the comfort of the Italian officers residing there, including a small *palazzo*, where the governor takes up his quarters in summer time, and which he kindly placed at our disposal during our forced delay.

The plain around is scattered with detached villages, where dwell the families of their native troops, large detachments of whom, both Abyssinians and Mussulmans, are quartered at Asmara. On a rocky eminence stand the large round huts where Ras Alula once lived and ruled prior to his discomfiture at Dogali; these are now given over to Italian government officials. The Italian School of Agriculture has made several preliminary attempts at farming in the neighbourhood of Asmara with considerable success, as far as cereals are concerned, though the climate has not been as propitious as it was hoped for the



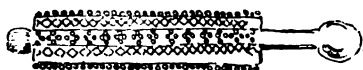
RAS ALULA'S PALACE, ASMARA



growth of the grape and the olive. In fact, Asmara is quite the most prosperous place in Abyssinia in these later days. Crowds of pauper fugitives come in here from Abyssinia proper in search of work, even from Gondar, Shoa, and the Galla country. Asmara has for ages been a place of some importance from an Abyssinian point of view. Around the old village, about two miles from the edge of the plateau, rise perfect mountains of rubbish — kitchen middens which point to the existence for centuries of a considerable population here.

The church in the centre of the village is also very old, quite the oldest church we saw in this part of the country. You go down steps into it, pointing to a great accumulation of *débris* around it. It is square, and built of stone with beams of wood projecting in rows, affording a curious parallel to the representation of beams on the large obelisks at Aksum, of which more anon.

Asmara has a daily market, being, as it is, such a centre of activity, and during our stay here we went



EAR-PICK

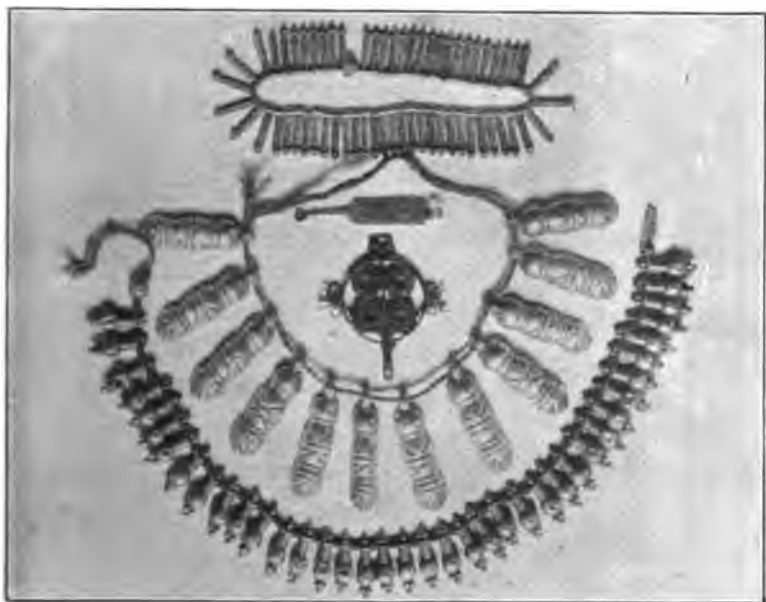


HAIR-PIN

constantly to this market to photograph and collect odds and ends from the Abyssinians who came in from neighbouring villages. We soon amassed a good collection of silver filigree

ornaments, hair-pins snatched from the heads of bewildered women, silver ear-picks, one of which,

whether of brass or silver, every one had tied to the blue cord, the *mateb* or emblem of Christianity, which every Abyssinian of the Christian persuasion has around his neck; thorn extractors, which these bare-footed Ethiopians are forced to carry with them (these tweezers are just like the *volsellæ* of Roman days, made of flexible metal); charms to ward off the



ANKLET, EAR-PICK, CHILD'S NECKLACE AND CROSS, WOMAN'S NECKLACE

evil eye; wooden hair combs, and oddments of all sorts.

Abyssinian filigree work is exceedingly interesting. One would almost think that the art has been derived from European artificers—I myself imagine from Greece. Up to quite a recent date Greek silver-smiths were found at Adoua and Gondar. One

Greek, Apostoli by name, is reputed to have left 100 children behind him by Abyssinian women, and some of the ornaments which we obtained in Abyssinia bear the closest resemblance to those we brought from the Greek islands.

Originally this filigree work would seem to have come from Italy to Greece in the middle ages. Greece has passed it on to Abyssinia, doubtless through the medium of Alexandria, where the Greek and Abyssinian elements have met for centuries on common ground. One hair-pin we acquired is of peculiarly fine workmanship, with a bird represented on the back and a cross at the top. It has two screws in it, made by twisting wire round the nail, as is done in India, and below it are hung little bells without tongues, a very favourite form of Abyssinian decoration, both for anklets and mule trappings.

The market at Asmara was inexhaustible in its endless points of interest and curious sights. Rows upon rows of natives sat vending their goods with outstretched legs, generally all their wares being contained between these two black walls—grain, chillies, spices, &c., being the chief commodities disposed of. Here and there sat the more elderly men and women under the shade of their umbrellas made of grass matting, and bound with gaudy strips of red cloth. Not far off one saw a woman undergoing the somewhat tedious and painful operation of having her hair done. The barber uses a long pointed pin to separate the matted locks, which she

plaits in rows along the head, and then, when it is done, she places a pat of butter at the top to melt in the sun.

There is a peculiar rancid smell about all Abyssinian women, for their hair and dress become saturated with this butter, and they never wash. The Italians find the Abyssinian women attractive enough, and rave about their beauty, and so have other travellers raved in their day. The buttered locks and rancid smell must surely damp the ardour of any ordinary European lover — but then tastes differ, and there is no accounting for them. Abyssinian women wear prettily embroidered drawers, when they ride, with massive silver anklets below. They ride like the men, with bare feet and a big toe in each stirrup. They have a long upper shirt, also tastefully embroidered, and also reminding us of certain Greek island costumes. As for necklaces, rings, and silver ornaments, an Abyssinian woman can never pile on enough. Her fingers are straightened with the rings she wears up



WOMAN'S DRESS

to the second joint, and if some of the necklaces hung with silver charm-boxes, and charms written on parchment, to ward off the evil eye, were chains around a prisoner's neck, one would exclaim at the cruelty of the torture; but fashion is a hard task-master in other countries besides Abyssinia. One can hardly fancy the wooden neck-pillows comfortable to sleep upon, but so elaborate is their *coiffure* that the Abyssinians prefer sleeping on these to constantly doing their hair.

We paid daily visits to Abyssinian houses during our stay at Asmara, and got to know some of the people quite well. They would give us *tedge* or hydromel out of great horn cups—horns which in the first instance must have been of enormous dimensions, and which, as we got into the interior, we found every chief had, out of which to regale his guests with mead. These horn cups on journeys they carry in stamped leather cases, and hang to the saddles of their mules. A very grand lady we visited was dressed in a most magnificent overcloak, for the description of which—it is too complicated for a male—my wife's Chronicle is responsible. 'Over all she had on a long purple satin mantle, lined with red and bound with yellow, with a wide embroidered border of many colours; the fringe was of little tongueless silver bells hanging on chains. There was an immense clasp of gilt filigree, and wide ornaments of gilt filigree, and wide ornaments of silver going out from it on each side all over the front of the body, and the poor wearer could only get her hands out very low down. Then

all about in different places were huge gilt filigree bosses about as big as tea-cups, with great silver em-



WICKER GOBLET, WOODEN PILLOW, HORN GOBLET

bossed rays all round—not comfortable to sit on, I should say, but very grand.’

Here for the first time we saw the Abyssinian lyre or harp, a specimen of which I coveted for six long weeks afterwards, until I was able to acquire one at Aksum. It is a delightful old-world instrument, exactly like the old Roman lyre; it has the *testudo*, or tortoise-shell, represented by a strong rounded piece of wood; it has the *cornua*, or horns, starting out of



ABYSSINIAN LYRE

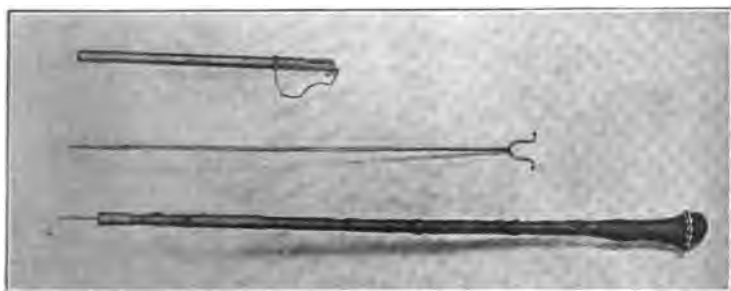
the *testudo* ; it is played with *plectra*, two bits of polished horn. Alas ! it is not a heptachord, but has eleven strings resting on a bridge on the opposite side to the tortoise ; otherwise we should have a complete survival of the old Roman instrument. The Abyssinians call it the *beganeh*, and say it was invented by King David, and in the sacred pictures in their church that monarch is always depicted as playing a facsimile of this instrument, whereas his father Israel is



THE 'CHERA MASANKO'

said to have been the inventor of another favourite Abyssinian instrument called the *chera masanko*. This I also got. It is a sort of violin with a square sounding board, tightly made of skin, and played with a little bow. The *asmari*, or wandering minstrels, also play it, and it is heard at every feast, whether religious or secular. It is not altogether unlike a certain Nubian instrument from Lower Egypt, and is said to be the instrument to the tune of which the Virgin Mary died, which scene is often depicted in the sacred pictures in the churches.

Whilst on the subject of Abyssinian instruments, I must mention the trumpet used at all sacred processions, and carried before great men; it is called the *malaket*, and is immensely long, about a yard and a half. It is made of wood covered tightly with skin, and ending in a gourd decorated with cowrie shells forming the orifice of the trumpet. It is exactly like the ancient *σαλπίγξ* or *tuba* which was similarly used in war and public games and festivals. The representations on ancient fictile vases of men



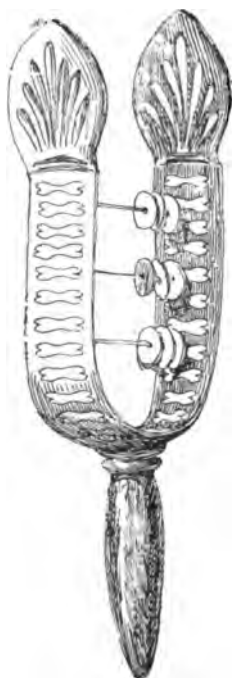
'IMBILTÄ' (FLUTE), GUN-REST, AND 'MALAKET' (TRUMPET)

with outstretched arms playing their trumpets with bell-like orifices are exactly like scenes witnessed frequently in Abyssinia to this day.

Another instrument, more purely religious, yet with a distinct archæological pedigree, is the rattle which the priests use in the religious dances. It is made of brass, neatly wrought, with a wooden handle. Three Turkish coppers are strung on to each of two wires across it, and it exactly corresponds to the ancient *sistrum*, also used in Rome, but more especially associated with Egypt, where it was



used in the mystical music at the worship of Isis (Ovid, *Met.* ix. 784). Concerning this instrument,



RATTLE OR 'SISTRUM'

also, the Abyssinians have their legend, which they also illustrate on their church walls. One of their saints, Ared by name, hearing three birds singing in a tree, was reminded of the Trinity, and the happy thought struck him of copying their music by jangling three coins together. Then follows the playing of the instrument before the King of kings, and the transfixing of the saint's toe by the monarch's spear, without his finding it out, so engrossed was he by the beautiful noise he had invented. Such trivialities as these are to be found in those sacred books which the Abyssinian priests study with such vigour.

No wonder their minds never get beyond the Jack-the-giant-killer stage of our childhood.

As the trumpet has only one note, so has the Abyssinian flute, the *imbiltà*. To make an Abyssinian band suitable to escort a great man or perform at a religious festival, you require four trumpets and three flutes, each player sounding a note in turn. The *imbiltà* is nearly a yard long, and is as great a mark of personal distinction as the umbrella. The Abyssinians are very fond of this

dreary music, and an Ethiopian who had been in Europe, and heard all the best music of our capitals, fell into raptures when he heard the *imbiltà* again on his return home, and said he had never heard anything to equal it in his travels.



ABYSSINIAN UMBRELLA

The Abyssinian umbrella is also an object handed down from remotest antiquity; it is used by great men solely as a mark of distinction, and by no means as a sunshade. Great princes only are allowed to wear red ones, and it may be said to correspond to the Order of the Garter with us. Ordinary officials

wear white umbrellas obtained from the coast, whereas the common people sport the far more picturesque article made out of grass fastened to a long stick. Where the Abyssinians got their idea of veneration for umbrellas from I don't know, but we have evidence that they were used by them many centuries ago. When Kilus, Bishop of Tua, came from Alexandria as the head of the Abyssinian Church in 1209, he was met by the king and nobles, and conducted to his quarters under an umbrella of cloth of gold.<sup>1</sup> The magnificence of umbrellas used in religious processions is even in these degenerate days marvellous. A beautifully wrought silver cross is fixed at the top, with figures of saints and other fantasies; the silk is covered all over with filigree silver ornaments, and the edge is hung with those little tongueless silver bells.

Whilst we were at Asmara numerous weddings took place, prior to the commencement of the austerities of the Lenten fast. To understand the somewhat complicated marriage system as it exists in Abyssinia, the ease of divorce, the exchange of wives, and the dissociation of the civil from the religious marriage, would almost take a lifetime. The first wedding we attended was between a middle-aged couple who were simply exchanging partners, and the late wife and late husband of the bride and bridegroom were both present at the ceremony, now married to each other. It would appear that the civil marriage is dissoluble at will, whereas the religious

<sup>1</sup> Severus, continuator.

marriage is, unless for some marked transgression of the marriage laws, binding for life.

We entered a yard covered with fresh green boughs, and scattered with hay, which is always prepared for the reception of the guests, and is called the *dass*. On a couch or *angareb* in one corner of the yard reclined the bridegroom, the priest, and the best men; on another, in another corner, were the chief guests; whereas the ordinary guests who had just come to feed lay thick as leaves in Vallombrosa on the floor. The bride sat in state in an adjoining hut, with a curtain before her, which was raised for our benefit that we might inspect her richly embroidered dress, and give her our best wishes. She received us with apparent shyness; but as she had gone through the ceremony at least twice before, and was no longer young, we put this down to affectation.

Cooking was going on on all sides; there stood steaming pots of boiled meat, dishes of raw meat, jugs of beer and hydromel, baskets of bread, awaiting the appointed moment for distribution amongst the guests. The atmosphere of the bride's hut was so stifling we could not wait there long, and chairs were provided for us outside. Presently the music came; the inevitable drum, and two *asmaris* with their guitars. Splendidly dressed men sat around us, in lovely warrior garb; the man who had slain a lion a few days before wore the animal's mane round his red satin cap; long swords in red sheaths stuck out everywhere, and the festive costumes were

fascinating to behold. The *agarafi*, or masters of the ceremonies, kept order with long canes, and drove out the children when their presence became too annoying. Then there was a little dancing, and when everything was ready for the viands, children trooped out of the hut, bearing baskets on their heads containing the food, each basket being covered with Turkey red (a fashion observed at all respectable wedding feasts); the bowls of beer and



FESTIVAL IN HONOUR OF A LION-SLAYER, ASMARA

hydromel were placed on stools; and then, when all was ready, the priest stood forth, blessed the food, and said something polite to the bride and bridegroom, and the victuals were distributed.

Everywhere in Northern Abyssinia, people, when they eat, are hidden from public gaze by having sheets hung over them; thus the company were fed in little batches of four to six, and over each batch was hung the sheet. This custom is universal, whether the

meal is partaken of by the roadside or in their huts. Some say the custom originates from the necessity of having to give to beggars if the food is seen, but I think that is hardly likely. It originates, doubtless, in some very antique form of modesty, that the process of mastication is not a decent one, and it is maintained in Tigrè to this day by all from the prince to the muleteer. When the beer and *tedge* had been handed round in horns to wash down the cooked and raw meat, hilarity spread with wonderful rapidity; the lion-slayer and other warriors kept order with their wands, having hung up their black shields with silver mountings on the branches of the *dass*. Dancing, music, and singing were becoming now so fast and furious, that we thought a dignified retreat was the best, and we left the revellers to finish the day alone.

Very different was another wedding we witnessed at Asmara, and far more interesting, inasmuch as it was a religious one, and was binding for life. A young deacon was about to take unto himself a wife prior to being ordained. The marriage of a priest in Abyssinia is exactly as it is in the Greek Church; he must take to himself a wife prior to ordination, after which ceremony he cannot marry a second time should he have the misfortune to lose his wife. As in Greece, those who devote themselves to the monastic orders take also a vow of celibacy. Our young deacon, who was about to take the important step of matrimony once and for all, was a shy, nervous boy of fourteen. After the religious ceremony in

the church, at which the Sacrament was administered under a huge red umbrella, the elements being bread and, in the absence of wine, a concoction made out of raisins, the wedding party proceeded to the house of the bride's parents, one of the best houses in Asmara, long and gloomy, lighted only by a door, and redolent of the most disgusting odours.

We were placed on an *angareb* as a mark of honour, and when our eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, we learnt that the bridegroom elect was concealed behind a sheet in one corner of the room, whilst the bride was hidden in an inner chamber. As on the previous occasion, much food was eaten and much *tedge* was drunk, with the addition of small horns of absinthe, which rendered the scene even more festive. Then a lot of little almost naked black children danced prettily in the centre of the room, and each received a strip of cloth, which he forthwith girt around his loins. When this was over, all the priests—and there were at least fourteen, assembled from neighbouring villages, dressed in their long white robes and with turbaned heads—commenced a series of religious dances, to the tune of a drum and the *sistra*. Each priest had a *sistrum* in one hand and a long crutch in the other, and their movements were exceedingly graceful, sometimes almost wild in their evolutions, singing, as they danced, sacred songs in Gez. The women looked on and marked their approbation with the gurgling noise peculiar to these dark Ethiopian beauties, which is called *ulultà*, and

which made one almost feel as if one was present at a rehearsal of the opera of 'Aida.'

When once Abyssinian priests begin to dance and sing it is extremely difficult to stop them. Some of them had undoubtedly taken more than was good for them; but at last they were suppressed and the bridegroom was brought out from behind his sheet; he was adorned with the great mitre on his head, which, being far too big for him, was stuffed with Turkey red to make it fit. Before his face he held a great brazen cross, so that his countenance was completely hidden, his body was covered with a huge burnouse, and thus attired he danced to and fro with the priests, nervously and with much hesitation, and requiring much guidance in his steps. Finally he was conducted to greet his mother-in-law, and was led outside by his best men, who performed a war dance with their shields and spears in the courtyard. Meanwhile the bride was carried out through the crowd on somebody's back, a bundle of velvets and silks, with no portion of her person visible, and was conveyed to a mule which was to carry her to her husband's village some miles from Asmara. We followed the bridegroom and his best man for some little distance, and when he was out of sight of the crowd he took off his mitre and burnouse with intense relief, and appeared before us as a young stripling in cotton drawers and the red-striped *shamma* of everyday wear.

Such is marriage in Abyssinia. The laxity of its ties in most ordinary cases has had a very



serious effect on the moral qualities of the race. Though not officially recognised, polygamy is commonly practised by the rich who can afford to maintain wives and families in different places; divorce is the easiest possible thing, and it appears to be no bar to the future friendly intercourse between the parties concerned. Probably the decay of Abyssinia and the physique of the race may, in a great measure, be due to this promiscuous state of intercourse which goes on amongst them. Italian officers told me, with regard to their native troops, that the Abyssinian youths were far more intelligent and active up to the age of thirty-five, and after that they soon became decrepit and useless; whereas the Mussulmans, though slower of development, were capable of active service much longer. We ourselves noticed that grey hairs were far rarer amongst the Abyssinians than amongst the Mohammedans. The Italian doctors say that the amount of diseases of a syphilitic nature is appalling amongst the Christian population.

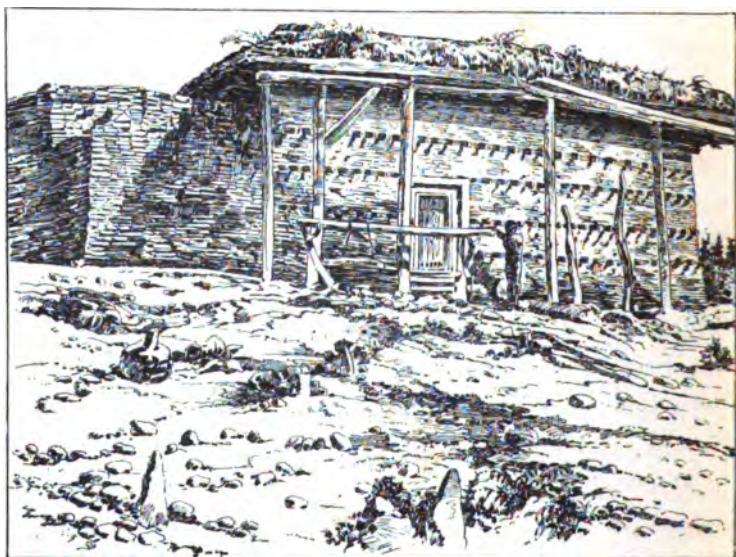
The difference of house and church architecture in this part of Abyssinia to that of the south is very marked. Hamasen, the province in which Asmara is placed, once formed a portion of the territory of the *Bahr-negous*, or King of the Sea—a monarch who admitted the supremacy of the Emperor of Abyssinia, but who was practically independent. He had his residence in the district of Okule Kusai at Digsä, a place which we afterwards visited. His men were the finest in Abyssinia; they were governed by

their own laws and paid their own taxes, and in their inaccessible mountains lived a life of great independence. This probably will account for the difference in architecture to be found in Hamasen. Instead of the round huts, or *toukuls*, common everywhere else in Abyssinia, we here find long low houses burrowing into the ground; poles are first stuck in the ground, with rafters of quolquol trees on the top; mud is plastered on to this, and holes made in which broken jars are inserted to act as chimneys. The walls are merely additional comforts, just stones inserted between the poles, and nothing to do with the original construction of the house. Sometimes these houses go in to a great length, having inner chambers for store-houses, through which you can penetrate into the house of a neighbour, and come out at another door on the other side of the town. Some travellers have seen in the dwellers in these abodes the lineal descendants of the Troglodytes—a theory for which I see no just support. Nevertheless, they are just like rabbit warrens, only not half as clean.

Dirt and filth of every description reign supreme in an Abyssinian household. Everything one touches is begrimed with dust, vermin of every sort abounds, and nothing would save the population from being swept away by fearful epidemics were it not that the air which they breathe is so pure and health-giving.

In the deepest recesses of shade and gloom the women live, shut off by a mud wall from the large

entrance room, where hang the shields, spears, and horse-trappings, indicative of male life. Here, squatted on the ground, the women cook, baking their bread on an iron platter over a few embers, in the *magogo* or small circular oven. Around them rise the great mud receptacles in which they keep their grain, very similar to those in use in Mashona-



CHURCH AT ASMARA

land. The beehive, made of cow-dung, is inserted in the wall, and in the corner is the quaint Abyssinian grindstone, at which the servant grinds and grinds for many hours of the day.

Outside in the courtyard is the loom for weaving, with a hole dug in the ground for the feet which work it. Here most of the household clothing is made, and excellent work they turn out too; nothing is warmer

than the Abyssinian *shamma*. Worn like the toga of old Roman days, with the end cast over the left shoulder, and hanging in graceful folds to back and front, the right arm is thus covered whilst the left is free. It is always white, the *toga pura* of Rome, with a red stripe down it, added, so say the Christian legends of Abyssinia, to represent the blood which flowed from the body of Christ. Grand men pull it right up to the tip of their noses, hiding the mouth to show their grandeur. When a still bigger man comes, they lower this; and when they present themselves before a prince, the whole of the left shoulder must be bare, and the *shamma* girt round the waist. Such is Abyssinian etiquette.

Instead of the round churches so common further south, we find here that square churches of stone, and roofed like the houses, are the most common. The church of Asmara is a particularly interesting specimen of this class of architecture, and, as I have said before, the descent into it is a strong proof, if nothing else was wanting, of its antiquity; the sacred precincts are entered by a porch or hospitium, where the poor wayfarer can obtain a shakedown for the night. By the side of this is the priest's den, where he lives amidst his treasures, his books, his crosses, and his church paraphernalia, like a hermit in his cell; he showed us his gospels and his illuminated books, but would part with nothing. This we found almost invariably the case in Abyssinia; the priests would not part with anything belonging to the church for love or money. Whether genuine piety, or fear of discovery,

was the motive power for this we never quite made out.

The yard of an Abyssinian church is the *lucus* or sacred grove of the pagan temple. It is a circular inclosure, planted with shrubs and reeds of all sorts, forming a shady covering when not exposed to the winds, amidst which the priests can sit during the mid-



ABYSSINIAN CHURCH BELLS

day heats to read their books, and amidst which they bury their dead. At the opposite end of the church-yard to the priest lives, in a miserable hut, a withered old nun, who has been twice to Jerusalem, and is holy past all comprehension. She is clad in a filthy garment, the original colour of which is uncertain, though it might possibly have been navy blue. She is covered all over with crosses and treasures from

the Mount of Olives, and reads her Bible amongst the tombs all day long. Her hut is a terrible sink of filth; but she is a cheery old creature, and always greeted us warmly whenever we met her.

Before the church, suspended from a beam supported by two poles, hang the church bells—just long pieces of some kind of slate, which, when struck, make a not altogether unpleasant call to worship. They are precisely the same as the *semandra* used in churches in remote parts of Greece, and have undoubtedly the same origin. The church itself is square, and built of stone with beams stuck in to support them. At the porch the wooden lintels, which the pious kiss with intense earnestness—in fact, kissing the walls and lintels of a church is a great feature in Abyssinian devotion, so much so that, instead of speaking of ‘going to church,’ they say, ‘kissing the church’—are carved with quaint and elaborate devices, strongly recalling the patterns one sees in churches of the old Byzantine period. At Asmara there is only one corridor inside, whereas most of the round churches have two—one for the people, corresponding to the court of the Gentiles, an inner one for the priests, the court of the Levites, and the square narthex, or Holy of Holies, in the centre.

Into this Holy of Holies priests alone are admitted. I felt an earnest desire to go in myself, but was not permitted, and did not gratify this desire until a subsequent occasion. Even the great chief, Ras Alula himself, was not allowed to go into the

Holy of Holies at Asmara, where they keep a wonderful picture, which our interpreter told us, regardless of anachronism and historical facts, represented the Madonna, and was brought by King Menelek from Jerusalem, when he returned with his mother to Ethiopia from the court of the wise king.

The outer wall of the Holy of Holies is covered with quaint pictures, done on canvas, and then tightly glued on to the columns and intervening walls. Here



CUTTING OFF ST. JOHN'S HEAD. ASMARA CHURCH

Ras Alula is represented as conquering the dervishes. All good men and true are represented with full faces, all evil men and enemies with side faces; and it is a curious fact that the Ethiopians, though dark themselves, paint all their people white. This is doubtless owing to the origin of their art, which unquestionably hailed from Byzantium.

One sacred subject struck us as peculiarly grotesque: Judas, *en profile*, dressed in green and lilac and

a striped shirt, has just cut off the head of St. John the Baptist, full face, and Herodias' daughter, again *en profile*, dressed in green and red, is receiving the blood in a bowl. This picture, as peculiarly illustrative of Abyssinian art, I drew ; for it was impossible to get a photograph of it in the dark corridor.



## CHAPTER III

*EXPEDITION TO THE MONASTERY OF BIZEN*

DURING our enforced stay at Asmara we arranged for an expedition to the monastery of Abyssinian monks at Bizen. Formerly this was the most important of the Abyssinian monasteries after Aksum, Debra Libanos, and one or two others; its territories extended right down to the coast at Massowah, and their numerous dependents paid rent in kind, cheese, honey, and corn, which insured for the monks a very large revenue. Now they have been deprived of these lands by the Italians in return for a sum of money which does not satisfy them, and in the whole of their Red Sea colony the Italians have no more vehement opponent than the monk.

The monastery of Bizen, or the 'Vision,' is very rightly named, for its position is one of the grandest in the world, situated as it is on an isolated mountain peak, 6,500 feet above the sea, and commanding a view over endless kindred peaks, right down to the blue waters of the Red Sea. But it is a terrible place to reach, and the path, if so it can be called, which leads to it, bristles with horrors. Those who told us when we left Asmara that we could reach Bizen and

pitch our tents near the monastery comfortably in five hours grossly misled us, for the five hours had long gone by before we reached the foot of the mountain, and as we had descended thither from Asmara several thousand feet, we were again in that wretched mist which enveloped everything in a clammy cloud. Evening, moreover, was coming on ; so we decided to pitch our tents at the foot of the mountain and make the ascent early in the morning.

Glad, indeed, we were that we did so, as our next day's experience will show.

Alvarez, who went on an embassy to 'Prester John' from the Portuguese in 1520, gives us an account of an expedition to this monastery. 'At a distance of seven or eight leagues from this town of Asquiquo (Arkiko, two miles from Massowah), on a very high mountain, there is a very noble "monastery of friars which is called Bisan."' He graphically describes the horrors of the ascent ; his description would almost do for ours. 'We on foot,' says he, 'and the mules unriden in front of us.' My wife gallantly stuck to her mule, until she and her saddle slipped off behind, and she narrowly escaped a bad accident on a heap of stones. She then, like Alvarez, went on foot, until she was tired, and then the soldiers who escorted us hoisted her on their shoulders from time to time, and thus she went to Bizen.

Poncet, a French doctor, who made an expedition to Abyssinia shortly before Bruce, has, with Bruce, fallen under the obloquy of having invented much that he saw. Poncet's editor remarks, in reference

to the doctor's description of Gondar and the palaces which the Portuguese built, that it must be an invention, 'for it is well known that the Abyssinians only dwell in huts and tents, so how could they have palaces?' Poncet's post-mortem reputation has, however, been saved, for these palaces have been frequently visited of late years. Also Poncet visited Bizen, and says that he there saw a staff of gold hung up. At this also the editor scoffs. But I do not see that there is the least reason why this should be an exaggeration. In nearly every respect Poncet, as far as I saw, is accurate, far more so than Bruce, and there is plenty of evidence to prove that some time ago Bizen was a much grander place than it is now.

Alvarez describes a church there, 'of grand structure, well built, and the buildings magnificently arrayed, and the chief part of this is enriched with three naves well and carefully constructed.' Salt alludes to Bizen as having been in ruins and abandoned when he passed near it, and the church and buildings which we see to-day are quite new; so there can be no doubt that the glories of Bizen were once much greater than they are now. The ascent to Bizen occupied us at least three hours, and they were hours of real hard mountaineering. We had started very early so that we might get the view before the mists came up, and we were not disappointed; we were just in time to catch a glimpse of the Red Sea glimmering in the sunshine many thousand feet below us, and of all the neighbouring mountains, before the

inevitable mists came on. Gradually they rolled up the mountain sides, first hiding one point and then another, until by midday it was as if we were on a rocky island floating on a sea of clouds.

Before starting, we had been warned that things female, whether of man or beast, are not admitted into the monastical precincts. My wife was, therefore, prepared not to see much, but she was not prepared for the terrible reception which awaited her. Suddenly, when within a hundred yards of the convent, we came upon some monks in long yellow garments, who at first scarcely realised the audacity of a female in approaching so near; but when they did, their horror knew no bounds, for not even a female mule is allowed to approach within half a mile of the convent. 'Better would it be for them to die than to have such a thing happen,' they said. However, we were firm and sat down, saying that my wife was tired, and that, though she did not wish to enter the buildings, she must stay where she was until she had rested and had some food. Imagining that all had been settled, I set off with our interpreter, and left her with the escort and muleteers to rest. When I returned, after inspecting the convent, to my dismay she was gone, and what happened she thus tells in her Chronicle: 'I sat down and pretended not to understand, and then another monk came, and he also shook hands with me, and kept mine a long time in his, whilst he gesticulated with the other arm and assured me that a famine, a pestilence, a war, or the burning of the monastery would be better than my

presence. The she-mules were quickly despatched; but I was not so easily disposed of. The two monks continued to stand there, and a soldier, one of our escort, who feared that I should be taken ill for my unholy trespass. As soon as my husband was out of sight, one monk began sighing and groaning loudly, and the other fairly sank to the ground, and, winding his arms round his head, wept and sobbed aloud. I was quite sorry for them, so I got up and went over and took the weeping monk's hand off his head, and said, "Salam!" (i.e. good-bye). Then the standing monk grasped me by the hand, and the soldier very kindly placed his on my back, and so I was rattled down the rocks in the sun for nearly half a mile. Then, the place being a little flatter, I was left to walk alone, and espied a boulder with a hollow in it, so that I could just get in, into the shade. In spite of expostulations, I could not be dislodged again, and refused to go further to a place where two crosses are erected, beyond which female animals, with or without souls, are not allowed to ascend.'

Such was the melancholy termination to my wife's expedition to Debra Bizen. This exclusion of females is also another parallel to the customs of the Greek Church. On Mount Athos, for example, the sacred abode of Hellenic monasticism, they do not even allow hens to exist for the purpose of laying eggs.

Unconscious of the difficulties my wife was encountering, I proceeded to the monastic buildings to inspect them. The church stood out prominently almost at the summit of the rocky mountain; but it

was new, and the old thatch roof of the Abyssinian churches had given place to a hideously glaring roof of tin. It was round as usual, with its outer corridor for the laity, its inner court for the priests and its Holy of Holies. They showed me some fine brass censers, Oriental carpets, a sacred picture or two, and a few books. Unfortunately, the *memer*, or head of the monastery, was away; so I could not see all the books which were under lock and key. Perhaps it was no great loss; for, having previously informed myself as to what to look for in Abyssinian bibliography, I have come to the conclusion, from books I saw at Aksum and other places, that there are no grounds for the belief that a vast wealth of old MS. books exists in Abyssinia. All their books are in constant use, and as they wear out they get new ones, and few of the now existing books appear to date further back than the fifteenth century, these being copies of early Coptic and Arabic works.

Ethiopia is rich, however, in apocryphal literature, concerning the genuineness of which they appear to entertain no doubt whatsoever; the Book of Enoch, 'Parva Genesis,' the 'Liber Adami,' an exciting history of Adam and Eve, a second Acts of the Apostles, bristling with miracles, being a few instances of works placed by them on the same footing as the other books which form our Bible. Besides these, there are the 'Synaxaria,' or lives of the saints, works full of wonders, yet from which many interesting facts might be obtained for Ethiopian history, if truth and exaggeration were not so hopelessly blended. These

books the priests and monks go over again and again, seated in shady corners, gently waving their fly-flaps to and fro as they study.

The outer court of the convent church was full of drums and rattles, umbrellas, and staffs or crutches ; the *pateressa*, or pastoral staff of the Greeks, used to rest on during the long services, and to wave gracefully to and fro in the religious dances. Outside



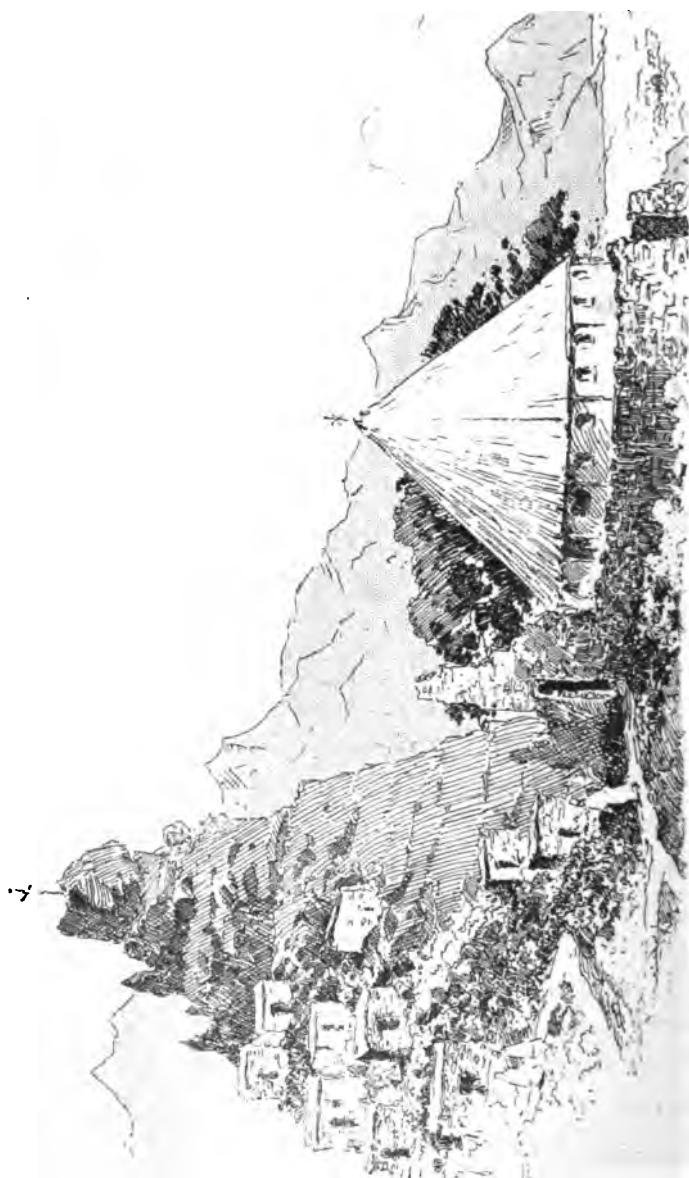
ABYSSINIAN BOOKS AND CASES

hung the stone bells, probably the same Alvarez saw here three centuries ago, and which he thus quaintly describes : ‘ The bells are of stone ; long, thin stones suspended by cords passed through them, and they strike them with sticks made for the purpose, and they make a sound as of cracked bells heard at a distance.’ The monks of Bizen have also a bell-tower and three bells of European manufacture, but for all ordinary purposes they still use the stone ones. The

monks live in little stone cells clustered round a rock, on which stands a cross, miserable little tenements, with a few patches of gardens around them, where they grow the herbs and vegetables which form the chief part of their meagre diet. There is also a big *commenda*, or dining-room, where they all feed, and kitchens and barns well stocked with grain. They told me that there are about two hundred monks in all on Debra Bizen, and none of them, save the *memer*, ever leave this mountain eyrie, but live forgetful of the world and by the world forgotten.

Certainly the Abyssinian Church is, as Dean Stanley says, surrounded with the 'utmost amount of superstition with which a Christian Church can be overlaid without perishing altogether.' Here we have preserved to us a specimen of what Christianity was in its most primitive days; here exist the monks of the Thebaid as they existed in the days of St. Athanasius. Still the controversies on the nature of Christ, whether He was of one, two, or three natures, divide the faithful as they did centuries ago; and the attempt of the Jesuits to convert them, concerning which we shall have more to say presently, though at one time nearly triumphant, has left not a trace of its influence. Probably the active contest with Mohammedanism, which has raged in Abyssinia for a thousand years, has been instrumental in making them adhere with a dogged determination to their tenets, and made them impervious to outer influence. One cannot help admiring the tenacity of the Abyssinian to his peculiar form of Christianity. The same





MONASTERY OF BIZEN

influence has been at work in Greece, where the contest with the Turks has had the same effect as the contest with the Arabians in the Ethiopian Church, and in both cases a perfect museum of old Christian rites and ceremonies has been preserved to us which have long ago disappeared from Western Christendom.

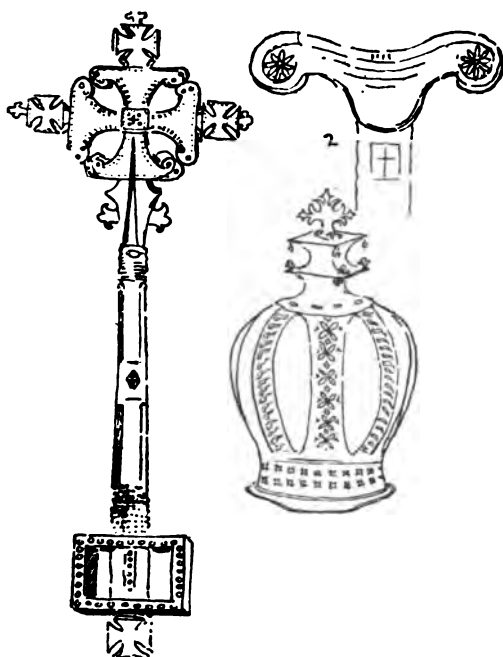
Before we had finished our rest and repast at the spot to which my wife had been inhospitably driven, the mist was upon us, and during our tedious descent to our camp we saw little else but rolling clouds and gaunt rocks peering out of them.

Shortly after our return to Asmara was the day of Epiphany; for the Abyssinians, like the Greeks, follow the old calendar, and their festivities consequently fall twelve days later than they do with us. We looked forward to this ceremony with intense interest, for it is the second biggest festival in the Ethiopian Church, second only to the great day of *mascal*, or the blessing of the cross, which takes place in September. It is a sort of vast lustration or baptism of the whole Ethiopian race, a day of great festivity, both social and religious; the cross is publicly baptised in a neighbouring stream, and to celebrate this event all the magnificent ritual of the Abyssinian Church is brought into play.

Very early in the morning the ceremony began. As soon as the sun was up we started for the scene of action, across the plain to the stream where the cross was to be baptised. Hoar frost covered the ground, and the air was keen but intensely invigo-

rating. Already the people were beginning to assemble, pouring in from all sides, dressed in their smartest and gayest; at the old church in the village the priests and acolytes had already assembled, and were preparing for the procession. I do not think any religious procession I have ever seen impressed me so much as this line of dusky Ethiopians, rich in the display of their quaint ritual and costumes, which have here survived from the earliest days of Christianity. At the head of the procession marched a man carrying a heavy umbrella, made of purple velvet and covered with silver ornaments; on the top was a cross and massive object in silver, and the edges were fringed with the long tongueless bells, which is so favourite a form of decoration in Abyssinia. There were many similar umbrellas in the procession—some, however, only plain scarlet, and some only white. However, as seen from a distance, the most striking feature of this Epiphany procession is its wealth of umbrellas, reminding one of the Assyrian tablets in the British Museum, and other representations of ancient Eastern display, which seems invariably to have revelled in a wealth of umbrellas. There were many acolytes too, wearing massive mitres or imperial crowns of brass, which would have enveloped their whole heads had they not stuffed them with Turkey red to keep them in their place. The priests walked in their white robes and white turbans—in one hand a *sistrum*, which they rattled vigorously, and in the other a brass-headed crutch. About the middle of the procession walked

a priest entirely enveloped in purple cloaks, so that not even his face was visible; and on the top of his head he carried the sacred picture of Asmara covered with a cloth, so that vulgar eyes might not rest upon it. Over twenty of these oddly-decorated individuals, gorgeous in colour, some carrying um-



SILVER CROSS

WOODEN CRUTCH

MITRE

brellas, some silver crosses, some sacred books, wound their way towards the stream.

About ten yards from the water was pitched a large tent of red cloth, erected for the benefit of the priests who wished to change their robes unobserved. When all were assembled on the bank, the cross and a large brass basin were placed in the midst, and the

service began, the first portion of which consisted in reading out of large books, held by acolytes, the gospels and portions of scripture appointed, the only part of which we could understand being the long genealogy of Christ, with So-and-so the son of So-and-so, so oft repeated. During the reading burnt incense was wafted around from magnificent brass censers. Chanting, bowing, and reading continued thus for about half an hour, during which period we irreverently strove to obtain photographs of the scene.

The second portion of the service consisted of the dance of the priests. Dancing in the Abyssinian Church is traditionally supposed to have been derived from the fact that David danced before the ark, though I am more inclined to believe that the steps and the music have both been handed down from pagan times, and that the excuse of David has been invented to maintain this favourite and really graceful and solemn form of worship amongst them. These religious dances, in steps, tune, and rhythm, forcibly reminded us of what a Greek chorus must have been round the altar of Dionysus. The cross and the brass basin have taken the place of the altar, the frankincense is there, and the singing and chanting are carried on in the form of a dialogue, as if one priest was announcing to another some good news which prompted hilarity; the black-faced, bare-legged priests, with white turbans and red velvet cloaks, a *sistrum* in one hand and a crutch in the other, waved to and fro in the mazy dance, whilst

boys beat the drums to regulate the time. The figures seemed to us something between a minuet and a quadrille. Every step was studied and graceful, as they changed over from side to side, shaking their rattles and waving their crutches, chanting the while in low and decidedly sweet tones. This performance continued for an hour, and we grew somewhat weary; but not so the Abyssinians. Men outside the dance who had *sistra* rattled them and appeared deeply interested; the women kept uttering their quaint gurgling noise, the Ethiopian mark of female approbation. None seemed tired but ourselves; in fact, the capacity displayed by Ethiopian priests for dancing is unlimited. In their nightly services, at weddings and other festivities, the priests are prepared to dance with a vigour that would put to shame the most energetic performers in an English ball-room.

The third portion of the service was next performed, namely, the actual baptism of the cross. In the stream itself floated a burning taper in a pottery vessel, presumably to add sanctity to the occasion. The cross was carried down to the brink; water was put into the brass basin, and beneath a scarlet umbrella the chief priest of Asmara sprinkled it with water, and thus the ceremony was performed. Immediately this was done great noise and hilarity prevailed. Guns were let off, and every one rushed into the water with bunches of weeds in their hands with which they sprinkled one another, and everything for a few moments was wild confusion. These bunches

of weeds evidently correspond to the bunches of basil used for a like purpose in the Greek Church after the Epiphany service. The women danced together, uttering their weird noise ; men rushed hither and thither like children, bespattering one another with water which had now become mud ; drums were beaten, *sistra* rattled, trumpets blown ; and, to escape from the noise created, we retired to a respectful distance and sat down to wait for the return. Between the waterside and the church the procession, which had reformed, stopped seven times, and at each halt the long trumpets, the drums, and the flutes started their somewhat unpleasant music, and the priests, with their rattles and their crutches, set to work to dance. Meanwhile warriors on horse-back, with their shields glittering with silver, their long lances and their quaint costumes, galloped to and fro on the plain ; sometimes two were mounted on one horse. Every one had on his best to-day ; the velvet embroidered robes of the Abyssinian chiefs, glittering with silver ornaments, are wonderfully effective adjuncts to a scene like this. Their horses are, some of them, very good, though small ; cobs from the Galla country, and long-tailed Arab steeds from the Soudan. On these they scampered about in front of and alongside the procession, performing feats of horsemanship which reminded us of those performed by Kourdish chieftains. The Abyssinians are splendid riders, lithe and active of limb. They only put their great toe in their tiny stirrup, and leap from the ground into the saddle, both mounting

and dismounting on the opposite side to which we do.

When finally the church was reached, after another good dance in the courtyard, the priests retired with their paraphernalia inside, and the great ceremony of the Baptism of the Cross was over, and all the parties concerned therein went to their huts to drink mead and *tella*, or beer, to their hearts' content. This latter beverage is very nauseous, and is made by the fermentation of *teff*, a small grain called the *poa Abyssinica*, used universally for making bread. The grain is left in the liquid, and the result is pretty much the same as the Kaffir beer made in South Africa, and is probably the same as the 'wine of millet' made by the ancient Egyptians. The Abyssinians are certainly far dirtier than the South African negroes, for their beer is always made in dirty pots to begin with; then the pot is hermetically sealed with a pat of cow-dung, and the man who pours it out makes a funnel with two dirty fingers to pour it into the glass bottle, out of which you drink it. Altogether Abyssinian drinks are very revolting, and, if necessity compels one to partake, one must not think.

From Asmara we made another interesting day's expedition, which introduced us to another phase of Abyssinian religious life and superstition. This was to the hamlet of Addi Ras, or village of the Prince, where is a church dedicated to St. Michael, and a healing spring where numbers of invalids from all the country round go to be cured of their various infirmities. A few years ago this church and village



had fallen into ruins; and Ras Alula, then in the plenitude of his power, restored it at his own expense, and after him it was called Addi Ras. We rode for about two hours across the plain, and on entering a shallow valley, with red rocks on either side and a stream, one of the sources of the Mareb, running down it, we descried the sacred village perched on a gentle eminence.

The inclosure of St. Michael's Church is just my idea of what the sacred groves of ancient days must have been; the wall surrounding it would be about 250 feet in diameter. We entered through the hospitium at the low gateway, where lay, on beds of straw, the sick and afflicted, awaiting the hours at which the bath must be taken. These are three times a day: at sunrise, at midday, and at sunset. Passing through this unpleasant entrance, we reached the sacred grove, a dense mass of foliage, consisting of tall wavy reeds, quolquols, mimosa, and other trees; and this sacred grove is all the more conspicuous because the country round is bare and absolutely treeless. The circular church in the midst is almost entirely hidden by the trees; and from outside the inclosure only the top of the sacred edifice can be seen, surmounted with its Coptic cross, with ostrich eggs stuck on the end of long spikes. The church which Ras Alula built is very richly decorated with Abyssinian paintings. On the outside the prince is represented with wings on horseback and a javelin in his hand, killing a dervish, and in another place killing a lion; whilst inside, around

the Holy of Holies, every inch of the wall is covered with paintings. The very quaintest St. Michael is painted on the door, before which the customary veil hangs, as in the old Jewish temples ; St. George is by his side ; Ras Alula's conquests over the dervishes occupy a large portion of the wall. The Emperor John is there, too, seated on his throne ; below are crowds of devils and the Abyssinian purgatory, re-



PAINTINGS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH AT ADDI RAS

calling somewhat forcibly the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa ; also the twelve apostles in all their respective conditions of martyrdom. King David is playing the harp he invented, and Israel plays also the instrument which in Abyssinian lore is particularly associated with him, to the Blessed Virgin who lies dying. The miracles of healing also form a conspicuous part of this wall decoration, and the sick of

the palsy who carried off his bed has been given an Abyssinian *angareb*, or couch. Of Abyssinian art, as it at present exists, the church at Addi Ras is an admirable exponent.

The holy stream is outside the inclosure, and is shaded by the tall reeds so associated in the Abyssinian mind with religious ideas ; it is a strong stream of water, which issues from the ground where the reeds grow ; it is icy cold, and has a suspicion of sulphur about it. The traditional idea connected with all these healing streams in Abyssinia is that they flow direct from the Jordan underground—an idea current in Greece for similar streams, and forcibly reminding one of the sacred source at Delos, which the ancients believed came in a similar way from the Nile. The continuity of these water myths is indeed remarkable, and here, as in modern Greece, S.S. Michael and George are the two saints who usually preside over them.

At the hour of twelve the bathing was to take place, so we determined to look on ; the halt and the maimed of both sexes came as the hour approached, and seated themselves near. Dusky Abyssinian men and women, old and young, absolutely regardless of decency, the presence of a large number of male strangers, and my wife's detective camera, stripped themselves in turn stark naked, and placed themselves shivering and groaning close to the sacred stream. A wooden bowl was placed near to it, with which the bather dashed quantities of the icy cold water over the shivering and breathless forms of the

invalids, each of whom, when the bath was over, put on his or her clothes without any attempt at drying, and retired to the hospitium shivering, but hopeful that a cure had been effected.

One girl, when her turn came, utterly refused to



WOMAN BATHING IN THE SACRED STREAM

undress, but lay on the grass writhing in contortions, breathing heavily, with eyes distorted; she was seized with a devil, they said, the *bouda* or mysterious possession of an evil spirit, a form of epilepsy which the Abyssinians, like the modern Greeks, attribute to

occult causes. She lay there unheeded and in contortions for fully an hour, and when we left Addi Ras she was still lying there, unable to summon up courage to take her midday bath.

Patients come from all parts to Addi Ras, as well from the lowland valleys near Massowah as from the neighbouring highlands, and many are the cures which are said to take place. A course of baths for



PRIEST'S FLY-FLAP

three days only is said to be sufficient for the lighter maladies, and few are the diseases which obstinately refuse to give way to a course of seven days. When cured, and about to depart, the grateful patients tie up their Christian strings or a bit of rag to the reeds behind the stream—a custom which prevails all over the East amongst the Persians, Turks, and modern Greeks, as in Ireland, an idea of binding the disease to the branch being always associated with it. No doubt the pure air of Addi Ras, the healthful

exercise necessary to get there, and the large amount of faith which the patients bring with them, have greatly assisted St. Michael in keeping up the reputation of his stream for healing properties.

The monks and priest who look after the church, and work the oracle, dwell in a little inclosure adjoining the sacred one, and communicating with it by a little low door. We paid them a visit, and found them busy reading their holy books and waving their fly-flaps. You hardly ever see a priest in Abyssinia without his fly-flap; it is an exclusively sacerdotal privilege to carry one; the handles are usually prettily carved, and the horsehair whisk is often dyed red with henna. It is curious that we have these fly-flaps of identical shape depicted for us on ancient Egyptian frescoes. Everything in Abyssinia connected with religion would seem to have its prototype in the ancient world; the *sistrum*, the fly-flap, the crutch, and many other things have doubtless been brought originally from the valley of the Nile, and, with the peculiar conservatism of primitive races, have been preserved even to our days.

After a frugal lunch in an exceedingly dirty cottage at Addi Ras, we bade farewell to St. Michael and his shrine, and rode back to Asmara late in the afternoon.

## CHAPTER IV

*JOURNEY NORTHWARDS*

STILL the news from across the frontier continued to be disquieting ; so we elected to take a week for a journey to the north of Asmara, in order that we might visit the confines of Abyssinia, and see the country where Christianity gradually fades away into Islamism, fully determined that, if the news on our return was not more favourable, to abandon our projected visit to the sacred city of the Ethiopians until a more propitious period.

The frontier of Abyssinia is, and always has been, a movable one ; no definite line of demarcation can be laid down on any side. When Abyssinia has been strong, the Christian element has extended very far north ; when internal troubles have occurred, Abyssinia has shrunk up again. King John's victories over the Egyptians, and the subsequent bravery of Ras Alula when Prince of Tigre, gave a great impetus to this expansion northwards. Keren, the capital of Bogos, was before this entirely Mohammedan ; Ras Alula, however, conquered it, and established there a large colony of Abyssinians ; and now, under Italian rule, they continue there and prosper, perhaps more

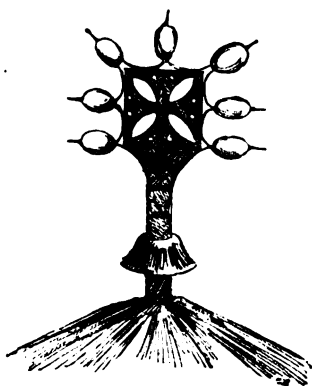
than their fellow-countrymen south of the Mareb. Keren is the bulwark of Christianity to the north, and the monasteries in its vicinity are interesting ; so Keren was to be the destination of our northern trip.

Our road was decidedly uninteresting at first, across the dry, undulating plateau, without a tree in sight for miles. During the rainy season, I am told, this road is hardly passable for mud ; in the dry season it is painfully arid and burnt up. These conditions, to my mind, must always tell against Abyssinia as an agricultural country. About an hour's ride brought us to the village of Addi David, with its little square stone church dedicated to St. George, built on the same lines as that at Asmara. Here we saw large quantities of cattle with the high hump and long dewlap of the Indian breed. The inhabitants were busily engaged in threshing their *teff* (*poa Abyssinica*), the grain most appreciated for making bread in this country. They spread it out on a flat threshing-floor, and drive four oxen, fastened together round and round on it, so as to thoroughly tread it out ; then they remove the stalks and chaff, which is piled round in heaps, and collect the tiny grain which remains on the floor. The bread made from *teff* is somewhat the colour of chocolate, and they make it into large flat cakes, with holes in, resembling crumpets ; it is always rather sour, and possesses a smell peculiarly its own, which is not very appetising.

Another hour brought us to the important village

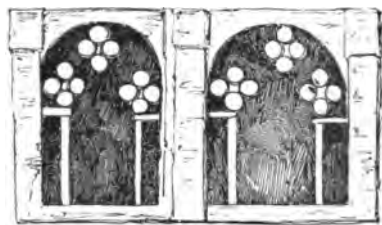


of Amba Derho, built on a gentle hill overlooking a somewhat fertile valley. We stopped here for a couple



CROSS ON CHURCH OF AMBA DERHO

of hours to inspect the large white church and its surroundings. The chief of this village, Dejetchmatch Hatva, is a wealthy man for Abyssinia, having a large stock of cattle and many fertile acres ; he built the church and supplied it with its treasures entirely at his own expense, and there is a quaint picture of him in a frame at the



CHURCH WINDOWS

door, in which he is represented as killing elephants and dervishes, and performing other deeds of valour. The windows and doors are very neatly carved in wood, and the cross at the top of the thatched roof is adorned with seven ostrich eggs. In one corner of the sa-

cred inclosure is the treasure chamber, which looks like a regular museum of Abyssinian church paraphernalia, all of them presented by the chief. There were quantities of books in their leather cases, hung from the ceiling, niches full of mitres and robes, silver and brass crosses innumerable, rattles, crutches, drums, and the like. In the midst of this medley sat

the priest on a couch, reading a sacred book, brandishing his fly-flap, and looking intensely bored by our visit and the irrepressible curiosity with which we gazed around us. Above was a bell-tower, in which the chief has placed a real European bell to supply the place of the stone ones which lie neglected below.

There was a feast going on in the village which we visited; it was in an exceedingly dirty house, and the floor was so paved with human beings eating,



CHURCH OF AMBA DERHO

drinking, and making merry that we could hardly get in. A wandering minstrel, or *asmari*, was playing his quaint guitar outside the door, improvising verses in honour of the givers of the feast, like the troubadours of old; men in their *gisillah*, or robe of state, were hurrying in and out, and mules richly caparisoned were tied up in the courtyard outside.

The leather work with which the Abyssinians decorate their saddles and head-gear is very gaudy, and reminded us of similar work in Persia; they cut out lions, crosses, and other decorations in green and yellow leather, and sew them down on to a red

ground. The effect of new ones is unpleasantly gaudy, but when they get a little worn and subdued these leather saddle-cloths look remarkably well. An inferior individual has a collar for his mule made of brass, with a bell attached; a *dejetchmatch*, or big



BRASS MULE COLLARS

SILVER

man, has his of silver, with many things thereon to jangle and call attention to his greatness as his mule ambles along. From the side of his saddle hung the red leather cases for his water bottle, his *tedge* horn, his knives and tools; and the rider, enveloped in his white *shamma*, tightly bound round his nose, his spear, and silver-mounted shield in his hand, presents an appearance distinctly imposing.

By the roadside you pass, everywhere in

Abyssinia, piles of stones at the spot where the church of the neighbouring village first comes in sight; each pious traveller adds a stone to this pile as he passes by. This custom is a common one also in Greece to-day, where similar piles of stones are to be seen at the point where monasteries or churches are first sighted.

The scenery improved immensely as we drew to the close of our day's march; fantastic mountains with finger points were seen in all directions; the valleys were full of quolquol trees, and as the sun set on the mountains of Barca, stretching far, far away in the direction of the Soudan, we had a panorama of beauty before us impossible to describe. That night we slept at the camp of three Italian officers, who are making a road to Keren with their native troops, where we were most hospitably entertained by Captain Persico, who is in command of this arduous undertaking.

The following morning we were accompanied by Lieutenant Vecchi and a strong escort on our way to Debra Sina, one of the mountain monasteries in this wild district, the monks of which do not bear the best of characters. Last year, during an insurrection of the dervishes, when Captain Bettini was murdered, and several native soldiers, the monks of Debra Sina harboured the insurgents in their mountain fastnesses, and the Italians had to shoot the prior, or *memer*, and four monks before they would reveal the spot where they had hidden the rebels and stored a large quantity of arms. We had a very heavy day's ride up and down precipitous mountains and through vast tanglements of jungle in the valleys before reaching the foot of the mountain on which the monks of Debra Sina dwell. Here a delightful stream, the Mai Ositt, waters a narrow valley, with precipitous walls of mountain on either side, and densely filled with all

kinds of tropical vegetation. The spot was so idyllic, and the ascent before us so arduous, that we elected to rest ourselves and our wearied mules, and to devote the next day to our visit to the monastery. We pitched our tents by the stream, and revelled in the luxury of a bath, whilst our native troops made huts of branches and lit roaring fires to frighten away the wild beasts—leopards, hyenas, and so forth—which swarm in these valleys. The *ascars*, or native troops, are excellent fellows, and were anxious to do everything for us they could; they seem never to get tired, and are as active as antelopes, and on long marches they take nothing with them but a bag of meal, with which they make little round loaves, putting a hot stone in the middle, and cooking them in the embers.

The ascent next day was a painfully stiff one, but not quite so bad as that to Bizen. We were able to ride as far as a mountain village called Sallaba, where we left our mules and scrambled for the rest of the distance almost on hands and knees to the rock-set monastery. We found the Abyssinian peasants of Sallaba very wild; the men and women have bushy hair, with long wooden pins stuck in for the purpose of scratching when necessary. These primitive people are perfect artists in cow-dung; with this material they make big jars in which to keep their grain, drinking goblets, and boards for the universal game, which the better class make of wood. I brought one of these away with me to show how universal this game is amongst the Abys-

sinians, from the chief to the peasant, and it reached the British Museum unbroken. This game is called *Gabattà*, and the wooden boards made by the better class contain eighteen holes, nine for each person. There are three balls called *Chachtma* for each hole, and the game is played by a system of passing, which seemed to us very intricate, and which we could not learn; the holes they call their *toukuls* or huts, and they get very excited over it. It closely resembles



ABYSSINIAN GAME

the game we saw played by the negroes in Mashonaland, and is generally found in one form or another in the countries where Arab influence has at one time or another been felt.

The summit of Debra Sina is just a mass of gigantic boulder rocks piled one on the other, and on the top of these dwell the monks. My wife, whose reception at Bizen had been so cold, determined on this occasion to see more, and presented

herself dressed in a fashion that was calculated to deceive the most critical monk on the subject of her sex; the disguise was even more successful than she had hoped, for, owing to certain braids which adorned her jacket, the monks evidently mistook her for a general, and paid her the attention suited to her supposed rank. She was conducted into the church, shown the pictures and treasures, and treated in a manner that no female had ever before been treated in an Abyssinian monastery.

The church at Debra Sina is a cave under a big rock, with a second and smaller cave, which acts for the Holy of Holies. In front of the church is a curious boulder where the pious pray, and have worn holes with their knees on it in so doing. Beneath this they say the picture of the Madonna was found, but I question if it ever has been moved since Nature erected it there. In exceedingly squalid cells around this rock church dwell some thirty monks; some of them are like the church, mere holes in the rocks, veritable abodes of anchorites. Around, as far as the eye can reach, are serrated ridges of rocky mountains, forming about as wild a view as could well be imagined.

Having satisfied our curiosity, we returned to Sallaba and our mules. The kindly inhabitants had prepared a feast for our men, during the consumption of which we had to wait. The principal dish placed before them was a wall of stiff porridge, made of the red teff seed, into the inside of which was poured melted butter mixed with herbs,

not unlike a rich mayonnaise. The men attacked this wall with their fingers, slipping the piece extracted into the grease until, in a very short time, there was nothing left of either.

Next day we went on our way to Keren, abandoning the idea of visiting another monastery in this district, called Tsad Amba, the approach to which is by a narrow ledge of rock, said to be exceedingly



ROCK CHURCH, DEBRA SINA

dangerous, and as the internal arrangement of one monastery is so like another, we decided it was not worth incurring any risk to see. At midday we halted by a stream at a spot called Eleberet, where grows one of those magnificent sycamores (*ficus sycamorus*) so universal at all Abyssinian places of halt. Many were the delightful midday hours we spent under the wide-spreading branches of these trees during our wanderings, surrounded by tired wayfarers like ourselves. They are quite a feature of the country, and may be looked upon as hostelryes



provided by Nature in a sunburnt land. They are usually by the side of a stream, and the ground around them is black with the fires of endless caravans.

Shortly after leaving the tree we crossed a ridge of hills and a considerable stream below them, and entered the district called Bogos. This district, a sort of debatable ground between Christianity and Islamism, the Abyssinian and the Arab, has a separate history of its own, though decidedly an obscure one. On the Greek inscription at Aksum, put up in the third century of our era, we learn how King Aizanes conquered the people of Bogos. The Arabian geographer, Ibn l'Wardi, alludes to the people of Boja as follows: 'These people are the merchants of Habesh (Abyssinia), to the north, their country lying between Habesh and Nuba.' In those days this country must have been one of considerable importance, for, continues the same author, 'a governor from Boja presides over Aidhab.'<sup>1</sup> Consequently, we may assume that the people of Bogos, with their mercantile tendencies, controlled the ancient trade route from Kassala, on the Nile, to the coast. Their capital, Keren, is now one of the most flourishing points in the Italian colony, and the Italians, when their road is made, hope to reopen this trade route and induce the caravans from Kassala to pass through Bogos and ship their goods at Massowah.

The country is now sparsely inhabited; but, as

<sup>1</sup> Habab, the district between Bogos and the coast.

Keren is approached, there are very curious evidences of a very large population having once existed here in the shape of certain tombs all along the roadside. These tombs are certainly not made now, and probably date from the time when



BLACK AND WHITE TOMBS OF BOGOS

the merchants of Bogos were men of importance. The approach to Keren is a perfect Appian Way of these tombs, they crown every height, and form a marked and curious feature in the landscape. They are round, and are thus constructed: A



BLACK AND WHITE TOMBS OF BOGOS

wall is built of dark stone round the grave from 12 to 20 feet in diameter; these circles are filled up with small fragments of either white quartz or dark stone until they form a mound about 6 feet high. The tradition is, amongst the inhabitants; that the white graves are those of good men who have died a natural death, and the black graves

are those of evil-doers and those who died a violent death. At any rate, the white graves are far in excess of the black ones. They are exceedingly neatly finished off, and look from a distance like large huts with whitewashed roofs. Most of them are in clusters, presumably belonging to one family. In one cluster we counted twenty-two graves; the centre one, probably that of an important chief or head of a family, being very much larger and higher than the rest; in this cluster we only found three black graves. We were told that the inhabitants who were buried thus assembled to sacrifice goats, &c., at certain periods, and weep over the grave, and that at each of these times they added more stones to the pile. Of course, concerning this it is impossible to say much, but it seems to me not unlikely that this form of sepulture may have something to do with that recorded by Agatharcides of the Troglodytes, who, he tells us, tied the corpse by its heels and shoulders, and pelted it with stones until it was completely covered, amid shouts of laughter. This looks not at all unlike an account of the funeral feasts and stone piles of Bogos.

Keren is more than 2,000 feet lower than Asmara, and consequently very much hotter. It consists of a hill fortress situated in the middle of a valley, somewhat recalling the position of Salzburg. All around are fantastic mountain peaks, and numerous villages are dotted about the valley. At Old Keren is the large building and gardens of a Roman Catholic mission, nestling beneath the mountain, which has

been established here twenty-five years. The daily market of Keren is held at a village called Tantarouga, and it is an interesting sight to see the nationalities there assembled—Bedouins from Barka and Mensa, Abyssinians, Jews, Greeks, and Italians.

On inquiring how the Christians and Mussulmans get on together I was told that they live here very peaceably, the only difference being the blue string which the Abyssinian Christians wear round their necks, and the fact that neither will eat the flesh of an animal which the other has slain. ‘Mohammed is one, Jesus is another; but there is only one God’ is the very laudable precept of religious toleration in vogue amongst the inhabitants of Bogos. A great number of the Abyssinians are Roman Catholics here, and dwell in the village around the mission house. The valley of Keren is exceedingly fertile, quite the garden of the Italian colony; they water their gardens with an elaborate system of irrigation, and they are most productive. Everything planted here grows in profusion. The gigantic baobab trees grow here to an enormous size, and with a considerable outlay of capital the valley of Keren might produce paying crops of coffee, tea, and tobacco. For many years Keren was under the Egyptian Government; many of the principal buildings were erected by them; but their power was shaken by Ras Alula, who, in his turn, was conquered by the Italians. Since then the revolts of the dervishes have kept the Italian Government active, and no substantial advance to prosperity has been effected beyond the

road, which, when finished, will connect it with Asmara and the west.

On our way back to Asmara we stopped for one night at the large Abyssinian village of Azteklesan; it is the highest inhabited point in this part of Abyssinia, and is justly celebrated for its keen winds and cold nights. Prior to the Italian occupation this place was ruled over by a powerful chief called Hadghambassah, feared throughout all the country for his depredations and cruelty. He originally came from Gondar, but chose this spot for the difficulty of attack. He joined the rebels in 1891 against the Italian Government, and smote Captain Bettini on the face when he came to see him. This proud chieftain was, however, subdued by the Italian troops, and is now in prison at the Italian coast station of Assab, where they detain all their political Abyssinian prisoners. Hadghambassah had built for himself a very fine hut on the highest point of the village, and fortified it with a wall of stones all round. He never left this stronghold except to go on his marauding expeditions, for he had so many enemies he was in a perpetual dread of assassination. We lunched in this hut, which is now turned into a granary; it is surrounded by ox horns let into the wall, on which to hang shields; it is fully twenty feet in diameter, and quite one of the finest houses in this part of the country. Not far from the house is the church, built at the expense of the same chief, with a picture of the Holy Virgin at the door, and below Hadghambassah and his wife, painted after Abyssinian fashion, with

white faces. It is curious that the dark Ethiopian should always choose to paint his good people white; black is associated, with them as with us, with devils and evil people generally.

At Azteklesan we managed, by the payment of a small sum to a liberal-minded priest, to get admitted into the Kedesta Kedestan, or Holy of Holies, and to see a sight which is rightly reserved only for the clergy. It was exceedingly dark, and the wax taper which lighted us burnt but feebly; however, we contrived to see a sort of double table, or whatnot, covered with drapery, which the priest removed with fear and trembling lest any infidel should be lurking outside and get a glimpse. All that this drapery covered was a square bit of wood wrapped in many pocket-handkerchiefs and covered with certain talismanic signs and letters of the old Geez writing. This is supposed to be a representation of the tables of the law which Moses brought down from Sinai, the original one being in the church at Aksum, and the whatnot is supposed to represent the ark or *tabout* in which they are kept. These are provided for the benefit of every parish church, and form the principal object in ecclesiastical processions; though, when they are brought out of the Holy of Holies, they are always so carefully covered with drapery that no one can see them.

When the Sacrament is administered, the door of the Holy of Holies is always kept open; but the interior is hidden by a veil, behind which the priests alone have a right to go. This feature is evidently

derived from the old Jewish temples, as also are the two corridors. People who are impure are only allowed to come into the first; the second one corresponds to the court of the Levites, where the priests dance and hold their services. In the sacred inclosure outside the church a very picturesque monk in his long yellow dress was busily engaged in reading a MS. volume, beautifully illuminated, which he put on a tall iron reading desk, to which were attached two chains with weights to hold down the pages as he read. The chief priest of Azteklesan brought out his best processional cross to show us; it is of brass, with various illustrations of the passion rudely engraved thereon; it is in form like a St. Andrew's cross, with various little flourishes and embellishments at the corners, and is, like many of the large Abyssinian crosses used in processions, supported by the necks and beaks of birds, conventional in character, so that sometimes the pattern is lost, and the supports are merely straight pieces of brass. But evidently in the first instance, whether in conformity with some legend or merely for decoration and support, the Abyssinian processional cross was represented as held up by the beaks of two birds with long necks.

To break our journey we encamped in our tents for another night, on our way back to Asmara, close to the village of Shuma Negous, the headman of which brought us as a present a large quantity of bread and some excellent honey, for which we had to pay a sum which represented considerably more than

the value of the so-called present. It chanced to be the Vigil of the Blessed Virgin that night, and the priests in the church had a very lively time of it, dancing, drumming, and playing the *sistra* until the dawn of day. As I listened to them, in vain trying to sleep, I could not help thinking that the Christianity of Abyssinia must undoubtedly, from its curious ritual, show traces of the peculiar form of paganism on which it was grafted. In the Greek Church we have abundant instances of how many saints and many ceremonies grew out of, and represent, the conditions of Græco-Roman paganism as it existed when Christianity was introduced; here in Abyssinia, as we shall show when discussing the ruins of Aksum. Christianity must have succeeded a form of Sabæan sun-worship; the monoliths and altars all point to this; and in the ritual of their Church we can still clearly see traces of this cult. The nightly services which end at sunrise, the circular churches with four doors orientated to the four points of the compass, the sacred groves surrounding the churches, and the dancing of the priests—all recall what we know of Baal worship, which was closely akin to the sun-worship of Southern Arabia. Ludolphus, in his valuable history of the Ethiopian Church, gives us a curious catechism used 200 years ago by the Abyssinians. To illustrate the Trinity the sun is given as an example, ‘being of one substance, but having in him three distinct things: rotundity, light, and heat.’ Then, again, on the morning of the great Abyssinian festival of the Cross or Mascal, which



takes place in September and is the greatest festival of the Ethiopian Church, huge bonfires are lit before sunrise on high places, and oxen are slaughtered before them. With points like these before us, I think there can be no reasonable doubt that the Christianity of Abyssinia succeeded to a form of sun-worship, and that many of the principal features of the ancient cult have survived down to the present day. Mystery has surrounded Ethiopia ever since the days of Herodotus; yet in almost every mysterious legend there is generally some foundation of truth; and when Herodotus tells us of the proposed invasion of Ethiopia by Cambyses, and the uncertainty of its loyalty, there may have been something in the mysterious 'table of the sun in Ethiopia' to which he alludes. 'Ethiopia borders on the Southern Sea,' he tells us, 'and the table of the sun in Ethiopia is a meadow in the skirts of their town full of the boiled flesh of all manner of beasts' (Herod., Book III. § 7). When describing Aksum we shall have occasion to refer again to this subject; but when I passed that disturbed night at Shuma Negous, I hardly dared to hope that we should ever reach the Sacred City of the Ethiopians.

## CHAPTER V

*ON THE ROAD TO ADOUA*

GREATLY rejoiced were we, when, on reaching Asmara, we learnt that Ras Alula and Ras Mangashah had come to terms and had sworn eternal friendship on the cross and on the gospel in the cathedral church of Aksum. The Italian governor telegraphed from Massowah that we might now proceed to our destination with as much prospect of safety as travelling in Abyssinia ever affords, and consequently we determined to start without delay. The box full of presents for the great men of Tigrè arrived in safety, containing carpets, burnouses, umbrellas, soap, scent, knives, and the like. We added to our staff of mules and muleteers, and when it was noised abroad that we were going, we had endless applications to join our caravan, for the road from the Mareb to Adoua is at the best of times a favourite haunt of brigands, and to insure our safety Ras Mangashah had promised to send us a strong escort of his own troops.

Three Greeks asked to join us, one of whom had just lost two brothers in the very mountains through which we were going to pass, and he was on his way to claim his dead brothers' goods. The two brothers

were murdered by brigands, because, Greek-like, one of them was parsimonious, and refused to pay for an escort, whilst the other rode ahead of his escort and was surrounded. Two Abyssinian priests also asked to join us, who were on their homeward journey from Jerusalem, carrying with them pilgrim-wallets full of Jordan water as a present to Ras Mangashah. The elder of the two was constantly mounted on one or other of the mules belonging to our escort, and the wallets of Jordan water we stowed away somewhere in our own luggage; so the reverend gentlemen got decidedly the best of it. When too hot, they stripped off firstly their respectable long black robe; secondly, their yellow robe beneath that, which they gave to one of our men to carry, and stalked along with their white umbrellas, black hats and *shammas*; looking far from priestly in their dress; but when they reached a village they resumed their garb, and rushed off to the church to kiss the lintels thereof and receive the embrace of the faithful. Abyssinian priests who have visited Jerusalem are always made much of on their return home. Their stories of the wonders they have seen are listened to with the greatest interest, and their place in heaven is supposed to be secured beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The first day's journey southwards was uninteresting and uneventful. We stopped for lunch and rest under a large sycamore, close to a village of primitive houses, which burrowed rabbit-fashion under the ground at our feet. The plain around us was even more dreary and arid than that to the

north of Asmara; but in the afternoon we suddenly came to the end of it, and found ourselves on the brow of a depression, from which we could see in all directions as magnificent a panorama of mountains as it is possible to imagine. Thunder was growling and rain falling heavily in the direction of the coast. We saw the lightning flash vividly in the dark clouds, but with us on the high plateau the air was bright and the sky clear.

Towards evening we descended into a river bed, one of the sources of the river Mareb, and climbing up past a glorious sycamore, under the branches of which a whole army could find shelter, we reached for our night's halt the village of Debarroa, a place of abject squalor and misery, but which in its day had been of considerable importance. We could get no milk, eggs, or meat here, for the wretched inhabitants had lost all their stock. Cholera and other diseases had decimated them, and, as an instance of the decay of Abyssinia, one could not quote a more telling example. Alvarez, the Portuguese ambassador, passed by here in 1520, and describes it as then the capital of the Bahr-negous, or King of the Sea. 'The town of Barua,' he says, 'is very good, and it is situated on a very high rock above a river on which are situated the king's houses, which they call Bet-negous' (houses of the king). A few piles of stones, an almost ruined church, and a few wretched hovels are all that is left to-day of this place. The Mareb below Debarroa is only a tiny stream with a narrow bed. It makes from here a great bend eastwards,

and then turning south, and collecting numerous other streams from the Hamasen mountains, flows westward towards the Nile.

The following day we slept at Addi Ougri, a newly-constructed Italian fort. Formerly, a village had stood here, and the hill-top was covered with wild olives, quolquols, and other trees, forming a dense jungle. All over the country one sees these sites of former towns, marked now only by these thick clusters of trees, which have grown up in them when deserted. At Addi Ougri the square church is still standing in the centre, and out of this the Italians have made a powder magazine. They have cut down most of the trees, and built a line of fortification round it, and, as the hill is isolated in the midst of an extensive plain, the position is one of considerable strength. About a mile from here the Italians have made an attempt at cultivation, and a body of men from the Italian school of agriculture have been stationed here. At present, however, their results have not been very satisfactory, and, curiously enough, though the wild olive grows here in profusion, they have not as yet been at all successful in the growth of olives sent out expressly from Italy.

The road we were now traversing is known as the Mangadi-negous, or king's highway, the road which for generations has been one of the principal entrances into Abyssinia; it is nothing but a mule track, well trodden, and easy-going for the mules. About two hours after leaving Addi Ougri we came across a large round stone in the middle of the road, called

the Emni Haïella, or heavy stone, which all muleteers passing along this road try to lift, and it is quite polished with the many attempts to do so, made in many years. Those who can lift it are considered fit and strong, and those who cannot are laughed at. It stands now exactly in the middle of the road, and tradition says that it was once a boundary stone between two provinces. This tradition is probably correct, for it closely resembles the ancient form of the boundary stone found in the East—just a large rounded water-worn stone, unhewn, and set up as a memorial or token between two covenanting parties. A similar instance of a test of vigour is found at the village of Saganeiti, about three days' journey from here, where stands a huge sycamore, and, when the men arrive under it, they try to run round the trunk holding their breath, and those who succeed in doing so are accounted vigorous and strong. The Abyssinians are very fond of showing off their powers of endurance. Many evenings, after a long day's march, our muleteers and escort would indulge in games of wrestling, leap-frog, and other kindred amusements; sometimes rushing after a ball, and hurling it as hard as they can at one another's faces. If a man misses, he has to stand and be thrown at by the man who succeeds in picking up the ball. They never seem to be tired. Every day after the march, whether long or short, the muleteers, after unpacking and arranging the camp, go off to cut grass for the animals to eat at night, to fetch wood for the fires, and water for the camp, and sometimes

these articles are not obtained without considerable difficulty.

We next reached Addi Quala, which is the last station of the Italians on their southern frontier before the descent into the valley of the Mareb is commenced. Here there are two villages, Addi Quala and Addi Kola, about a mile apart, where once dwelt two rival chiefs, constantly at war. When the Italians came they erected their camp between the two and tried to keep the peace; but one of the chiefs, Lij Bayanèh, revolted against them, and tried to obtain assistance from Ras Alula from across the frontier. He is now in prison at Assab, and the Italians have taken his village into their own hands, and his rival is their right-hand man, and provides them with most of their native troops at this station. The following morning we were taken to see the view from the edge of the plateau down into the Mareb valley; it is one of the most remarkable in Abyssinia. Precipitous basaltic rocks descend down into the broad valley beneath, tumbling over one another in wild confusion. A few years ago the valley here was the haunt of elephants, who came to feed on the trees which grow here in profusion, but now they have retreated further inland. Still, however, huge pythons inhabit these rocks, and dog-faced apes bark at you from various vantage grounds. Beyond the deep valley of the Mareb rise the peaks of the Adoua and Aksum mountains, amongst which we hoped to find ourselves in a day or two. They resemble in many ways the distant views one obtains.

of the Dolomites, jagged, fantastic peaks of every form and shape, looking mysteriously weird and fascinating, more especially as they are still the home of the free and independent Ethiopians, the strongholds of rebel chiefs, and for us a sort of promised land



ABYSSINIANS WINNOWING GRAIN

after our long delays and wanderings in the Italian colony.

Near Addi Quala there are some patches of fertility ; but the cholera scourge, drought, and other causes have had, as elsewhere, a ruinous effect here. We saw a picturesque group of men winnowing a sort of vetch with which the inhabitants make bread and other farinaceous foods in these parts. They hold large baskets of the dried pods high over their heads, and let them drop out gently, so that the wind



carries off the husks, and allows the small pea to fall on the ground below.

The friendly chief and most of his men turned out next morning to escort us on our road. It was quite an imposing sight. Drummers led the way; flute-players sounded their harsh, raucous notes; trumpeters bellowed forth hideous noises; and the chief, on a lively Galla pony, with a saddle-cloth decorated with lions cut out of green leather and sewed down on to a piece of red, greeted us warmly, and wished us a successful journey.

As we descended into the Mareb valley on foot—for the road is too precipitous and rocky to ride down—we felt that our adventures were about to begin, and that we were leaving safety and civilisation behind us. The valley below is celebrated as the spot on which the Emperor John slaughtered the Egyptians in the year 1875. The Mohammedan forces were encamped at Addi Quala, and, ignorant of the proximity of the Abyssinians, prepared to cross the Mareb at a spot called Gudda-Guddi. They dug deep wells, which are still to be seen; and, just as they were commencing to march on, the Emperor John and the Princes of Tigrè fell upon them, and not one man escaped. Their leader, Arakel Pasha (probably a Greek of the name of Herakles), the one who built the palace at Massowah, fell fighting under a tree which is still shown, and their friends who saw their discomfiture from the heights above, recognising the hopelessness of the contest, fled in dismay to Asmara, and thus Abyssinia was freed from the threatened danger.

We had to stop two nights near a village called Gundet, down in the Mareb valley, until we received word that the escort from Ras Mangashah would meet us by the river, and take us over from the hands of the Italians. It was tremendously hot down here; the heat in some of these valleys is excessive, and the vegetation rank and tropical. Luckily, it was just now the dry season, and there was no fear of fever; but in the wet weather the



THE MOUNTAINS OF ADOUA FROM GUNDET

Mareb valley is very dangerous, and many are the travellers who have succumbed here to the pernicious fevers which arise from the vegetation decaying in the wet.

The Abyssinians are supposed to be very clever in the use of herbs in curing these fevers; we, luckily, had no occasion to call upon their skill. We also were told that they know many cures for many diseases, including hydrophobia; but I think these mysterious medicines probably would not stand a very careful analysis. Our interpreter periodically dosed himself with *kouso*, for the *tænia* or tapeworm,

and at these times was always particularly inert and sorry for himself; and whilst we were at Gundet our men tried their hands at curing the sore backs of our mules in a particularly horrible manner, but which was in most cases successful. They first tie the legs and head of the unfortunate animal so that he cannot do more than wriggle, then they cut deep cicatrices in the back through the sore places with a knife; a sickle is then heated in the fire, with which they cauterise the gashes, and finally they fill up the wounds with dung. It was altogether a most sickening sight, and to hear the red-hot sickle hissing in the gash made us feel quite ill; but it is surprising to see how quickly the mule, when released from his bondage, pulls himself together after a shake, and begins to graze as if nothing had happened. In a few days the wound is healed, and he again carries his burden. Most of the Abyssinian mules bear traces of this severe remedy having been applied to them, and, probably, as the mules seem to forget it so quickly, the process is not so cruel as it looks.

The heat at Gundet was most uncompromising; so, on hearing overnight that the Abyssinian escort would be waiting for us early on the following morning by the river, we struck our camp in the dark, and were in the saddle before five o'clock, with the pleasing result that we reached the river-bed before eight in comparative cool. The Mareb at this season of the year is nothing but a dry bed of rocks. After the rains, I am told, it is a raging and almost impassable torrent. As it was, we had to search about

some time before we could find water to cook our breakfast with. The escort had not arrived, nor did it arrive till well after mid-day ; so we spread our rugs beneath a tree in the river-bed, and repaid the hours of rest we had borrowed from the night. Lion and crocodile stories are many here, but we neither heard nor saw either of these formidable beasts, and only pondered in our minds over what crocodiles do in the dry season. Do they bury themselves in moist sandy holes, or do they live tightly packed in the few deep pools found all the year round in the river-bed ?

Fitaurari Mangashah arrived at one o'clock, and, bidding farewell to our escort provided by the Italians, we placed ourselves in his charge. He is the chief of one of the villages near the Mareb, and had received orders from Ras Mangashah to escort us in safety to Adoua. From the Mareb to Adoua the distance is only about twenty miles, but it is one of the most dangerous bits of country in all Abyssinia. Lofty, impenetrable mountains line the road on either side ; in these many brigands have their haunts, and come down on unprotected caravans. When the country is in a disturbed state, all the leading men who do not wish to bind themselves to either side fly to the mountains near the Mareb, living in caves, and are on the look-out for any plunder that may come in their way. By this time our caravan had swollen to such a size we could not count them all ; poor men with donkeys, foot-passengers with bundles—all were glad of this oppor-

tunity to get safely through the mountains to Adoua.

The escort was composed of about 150 men of the most delightful kind, with all sorts of queer arms, lances, antiquated guns, which they held down from the back of their necks, and rhinoceros-hide shields mounted in silver. We were told that



FITAURARI (GENERAL) MANGASHAH

there were no less than five of the rank of Fitaaurari or general, and these had all their little armour-bearers, who ran along in front, carrying the shields and lances. The five generals had only three mules between them, but they rode two and two, changing about. Fitaaurari Mangashah was full of fun, with a great number of projecting teeth, which he showed whenever he laughed; and they were all full of

compliments, the burden of which was how dearly they loved the English, because they spent so much money and gave such handsome presents—a gentle hint, on entering Abyssinia, that the same was expected of us. It was terribly hot, and the road was full of thorny acacias, which made progress difficult; they say that the acacia branches are only cut down when the king passes by; and as King Menelek never shows himself in Tigrè, but remains shut up in Shoa, there is every prospect that this road will soon become filled up. After a gradual ascent of about 500 feet, we reached a long narrow plain, entirely shut in by mountains, at five o'clock in the afternoon. When about half-way across the plain we decided to pitch our camp for the night, and chose a huge sycamore tree as offering pleasant shade. It was full of beautiful blue birds and monkeys; but it had other occupants too, in the shape of bees, which forthwith attacked us, and we were obliged to mount our mules as quickly as possible and ride off. Our wretched interpreter, who had disturbed these bees, was screeching and waving his arms about wildly, with his curly hair full of them, and it was some time before he was freed from his tormentors and pacified again. All the shade we could get for our camp was from a thorny mimosa without leaves, and until the sun went down we were almost boiled alive.

This spot is the usual halting-place for caravans, and is called Lah-lah-ah, and soon after our arrival peasants came from a village on the hills, with

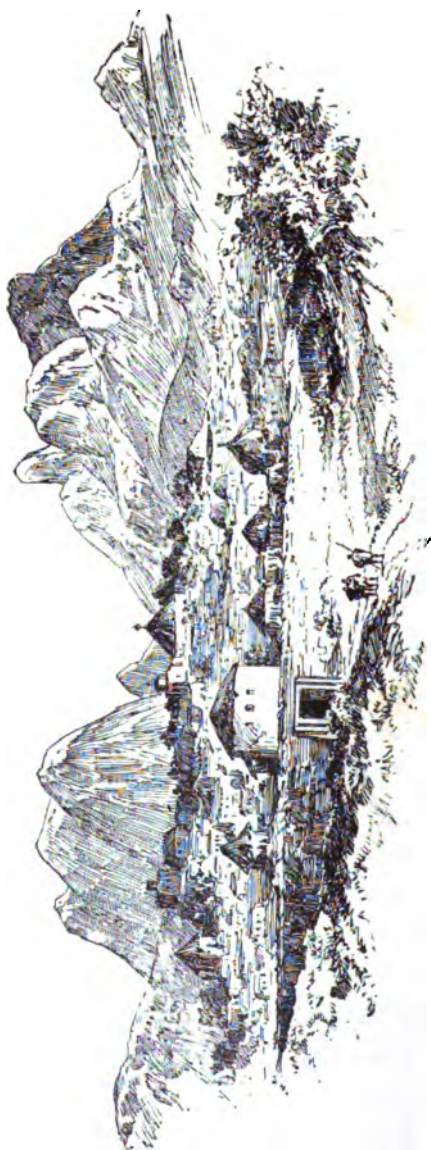
presents of milk and bread, for which we had to pay considerably over the market value. Our escort kept awake all the night, singing and talking, for they said the place was dangerous, and a continual watch was necessary ; so we didn't get much sleep, and arose at four, that we might perform part of the journey before the heat became great. An hour's ride brought us to the foot of the mountains, up which we toiled for several hours, reaching about ten o'clock a cool and shady spot with water, where we halted for our breakfast and midday rest. By the way, we passed the ruins of a once flourishing village called Daro-tachle, and on several peaks around us we saw other ruined villages. Fitaaurari Mangashah apologised for these in touching terms, lamenting the misfortunes and decay of his country, to which remarks we felt it hard to reply.

At Mai Koumaul, the stream where we halted, we were met by another grandee and more soldiers, sent by Deghetch Ambeh, Governor of Adoua, and a relation of Ras Mangashah, to welcome us ; and with now quite a formidable army our caravan started about one o'clock on the last stage of its journey to Adoua. We soon entered a narrow pass, densely wooded, and walled in on either side by precipitous cliffs ; this is known as the Gashiwarkel pass, and is reckoned the most dangerous point on the whole road. Here the Greek informed us that his brothers had been murdered about three months before, and we were shown the grave of a rich bishop of Adoua who had here been fallen upon by thieves and assassinated. Al-

together this entrance into Abyssinia was not a very reassuring one, and we felt that we were now amongst a treacherous and lawless race. Shortly after passing through the Gashiwarkeh pass we got our first glimpse of Adoua, nestling beneath its fantastic mountains, but spoilt irretrievably by the fact that its principal church has in late years been given a zinc roof instead of the old-fashioned thatch. This horrible roof catches the sun, and gleams provokingly, and was a perpetual eyesore to us all the time we were at Adoua.

The mountains of Adoua are certainly the most picturesque and fantastic in shape of any mountains I know; most of them are nearly inaccessible—*ambas*, as they call them, where the chiefs of Tigre repair in troublous times. Many of them are fortified and victualled in case of need. One or two have monasteries perched on the top, where monks dwell, as they do at Bizen and Debra Sina, cut off from the world by precipices and toilsome paths. Others, again, have political prisoners thereon, kept there in inaccessible points, from which escape is impossible. The curious fact is that most of them have springs of water near the summit. Bermudez, the Portuguese patriarch who fought so brave a fight for the conversion of the Abyssinians in the middle of the sixteenth century, describes quaintly thus his imprisonment on one of these *ambas*: ‘There are in this country certain high hills, commanding the country with great advantage, and all about steep like a broken rock, so that in nowise can they be ascended but by very narrow ways made





THE TOWN OF ADOUA

of hand ; and on the top are great plains, some of a league and more, and some of them seven or eight leagues, with very good fields and fountains of good water on the top, and other means for people to live on them, as indeed they do ; but the ways are so dangerous that none can come in or out from these rocks without the consent of them that keep them. These rocks serve for fortresses, and therefore in that country there are no walled cities. To one of these did the king command me to be carried by two of his captains to make an end in it without any hope of coming out.'

At Addi Abouna, about two miles from Adoua, by the side of a stream, we beheld an imposing spectacle ; all the priests in their best vestments, with their umbrellas and crosses, were assembled to greet us and give us their blessing. We all got off our mules and respectfully advanced towards them, and had the silver cross laid on our brows and put to our lips to kiss. In return for this mark of priestly favour I presented them with three Maria Theresa dollars, which was all the change I had in my pocket, and I have reason to believe that the reverend divines were not at all satisfied with the donation. We mounted our mules again, and, amidst the quavering greetings of many women who had assembled to see the rare sight of a European lady amongst them, we proceeded on our way to Adoua.

At Addi Abouna is the residence of the Abouna, or head of all the Abyssinian Church, sent from the Coptic Church in Egypt. At present, however, there

is a dispute between the Abyssinian and Alexandrian Christians, and no Abouna now occupies this position. Formerly he dwelt at Gondar, but, owing to the recent descent of the dervishes on that town, he left Gondar and came to dwell near Adoua.

## CHAPTER VI

*THE PORTUGUESE EPISODE*

ALMOST the only historical point in the annals of Abyssinia since the more remote ages, which is of interest to those outside the country, is the Portuguese episode, when the enterprising missionaries sent out by Portugal almost succeeded in converting the whole of Ethiopia, and establishing there the papal supremacy. The fact that they did not quite succeed, and that they have left absolutely no trace behind them of their influence, illustrates well the Abyssinian character, and the tenacity with which he clings to the old superstitions which have survived since the very earliest days of Christianity. This fact encourages me to introduce here a short sketch of the history of this episode. The authorities for the history of this period, which lasted for over a century, are very full and very interesting. Ambassadors and patriarchs from Portugal, Alvarez, Bermudez, and others, wrote accounts of their journeys into the so-called kingdom of Prester John. The Jesuit missionaries located at Fremona and other Catholic settlements wrote long letters to their general in Europe, and during this religious occupation of the Roman Catho-

lies Abyssinia was more in touch with the rest of the world than it had been since the Græco-Roman days when the colonies on the Red Sea traded with the kings of Aksum and established their civilising influence over the country.

The first European to visit Abyssinia in modern times was the Portuguese traveller, Pedro de Covilham, who, on his way to India in search of the somewhat mythical Christian monarch called Prester John, heard, when in one of the ports of the Red Sea, of the Abyssinian Christians, and supposed that he had reached his destination. Covilham went into Abyssinia, and remained there from 1490 to his death. Doubtless he sent back word concerning the things he saw to the King of Portugal, and the condition of the Ethiopian Church; but there are very meagre details concerning his stay; and whether he was forcibly detained by the Abyssinian emperor, like many a subsequent traveller, or whether he remained through choice, must always be a matter of speculation. His life, his marriage, and his death in Abyssinia will always be surrounded by mystery. At any rate, the presence of Covilham in Abyssinia gave rise to the subsequent chain of events, and undoubtedly was the motive power which prompted the Emperor of Abyssinia, David II., to send an embassy to the King of Portugal in 1513. Damiano Goez gives us an account of this embassy under the guidance of the Armenian Matthew, '*Legatio magni Indorum presb. Joan. ad Emanuel Lusitaniæ anno 1513.*' The result of this was a return embassy from

Portugal to Abyssinia, under Father Francesco Alvarez, which reached Massowah, under the conduct of Matthew, in 1520; and the narrative of this embassy, which lasted from 1520 to 1527, written by Alvarez, and translated by Lord Stanley of Alderley, in a volume of the Hakluyt Society, forms the earliest and most reliable account of the country during modern times. Alvarez was accompanied by his secretary and physician, John Bermudez, and one or two others, who remained behind, and who laid the seeds of that intercourse with Europe which was so soon to produce such interesting results.

About this time, 1528–1540, a terrible scourge fell on Abyssinia. Mohammed Gran, the ruler of Harrar, to the south of Abyssinia, mustered all the forces of Islam at his command and attacked the country, ravaging it from end to end. He destroyed the church at Aksum, and robbed it of its treasures, and the tradition of the horrors perpetrated by this Moslem chief is still retained by Abyssinia to-day. At Aksum we constantly were told of the magnificence of the place ‘before the days of Gran.’ Probably, never was the empire of Abyssinia nearer the point of extinction than at this period, and of being merged in the conquests of Islam. In his extremity, the Abyssinian emperor sent John Bermudez, who was still resident in his country, on an embassy to Portugal to demand assistance, and his request was granted. Pope Paul III. made Bermudez Patriarch of Ethiopia, and he returned to Abyssinia with full powers to do his best to restore order

in Abyssinia and win over the Abyssinian Christians to the Roman Catholic allegiance. He entered Abyssinia again in 1541, and with him was Don Christoforo de Gama, in command of the 450 musketeers sent by the Portuguese, and in their train they brought six small pieces of artillery, which did great work in subduing the enemy.

They were landed at Massowah by a fleet in command of Estevan de Gama, brother of Christoforo, and at first de Gama was victorious in all his engagements with Gran; but in 1543 de Gama met with serious reverses, and, unfortunately, died from wounds received in an engagement. However, shortly after, his death was avenged by a Portuguese, who shot Mohammed Gran, and the victory of the Portuguese and Abyssinians was complete. The head of the terror of the Abyssinians was exposed for view in most of the towns, and tranquillity again restored. The Emperor Claudius, or, as he is spelt in the Ethiopian MSS., Galawdewos, was on the whole friendly to the Portuguese, and permitted Bermudez to carry on his proselytising work. Now and again, however, as we have seen, he would rebel against the yoke that his preservers were preparing for his country, and sent Bermudez to prison on an *amba*; but, on the whole, during the patriarchate of Bermudez, much progress was made, and many proselytes joined the mission. After the ravages of Gran, much of the work the Portuguese had to do consisted in the reconstruction of the shattered empire; and their task was no easy one, having to contend with prejudice,

poverty, and, now that the object of danger was removed, the inherent love of the Abyssinians for their ancient customs. Bermudez wrote an interesting account of his experiences in Ethiopia, which were published in Lisbon in 1565.

In 1555, John Numez Barreto was sent out by John III. with a large number of missionaries to succour the infant Church, and Andrea Oviedo succeeded Bermudez as patriarch of the Church. He reached Ethiopia in 1557, and was received well by the Emperor Claudius; but this monarch died two years later, and during the reign of his son, Wahag Sagad II., the Catholic missionaries were very badly treated. From the letters of the Jesuits to their general at home, we learn that Oviedo was, during the course of his patriarchate, which lasted till his death in 1577, exiled to the mountains no less than three times; they relate several miracles performed by his prayers, and certain points which are hard to believe; but from the narrative the main facts appear clearly established that the missionaries had much trouble in their work, and made but slow progress at this period. Internal wars devastated Abyssinia during this period, until the death of Malak Sagad I. in 1597. Meanwhile, Oviedo had died at Fremona in 1597, and a successor in the patriarchate was despatched to succeed him in 1580—Father Pierre Paës Castillan. He left Lisbon in the same year, but had the misfortune to be caught by the Turks, and served in the galleys for many years, and did not reach his destination till 1603. Meanwhile, the Abyssinian



Church was administered by men who had served under Oviedo, and, under the kindly protection of the Emperor Yakob, made much progress. Father Paës was a man of wonderful vigour and energy, and, on his arrival in Ethiopia, was well received by the Emperor Yakob, who declared himself a Roman Catholic in the following year. To Father Paës was due the construction of the many Portuguese buildings which are still to be seen in Abyssinia. He built the king's palace at Gondar, which cost him an infinity of labour, for he was forced to teach the workmen everything, and look after them like a master builder. To him probably is due the reconstruction of the cathedral church at Aksum, as it at present exists, and which had been destroyed by Mohammed Gran. Another Jesuit, Balthazar Tellezius, gives us an account of the coronation at Aksum of the Negous Susenyos, or, as the Abyssinian chronicles call him, Malak Sagad III., who succeeded the Emperor Yakob in 1607. 'The emperor wore a dress of purple silk, and, with a cross in his right hand, rode up to the steps on a richly caparisoned horse. Here he alighted, and the steps were lined by children in white, who barred his passage with a riband of red silk. This he cut with his sword, and was then conveyed to the sacred stone, on which he was crowned, whilst the priests sang and danced around him.'

In the Negous Susenyos the Portuguese had a warm ally, and during his reign their power in Abyssinia reached its culminating point.

From the Jesuit letters of this period we learn

about the building of Fremona, the Portuguese fortress, about a mile and a half out of Adoua. The name Adoua does not occur in any of these letters, so I imagine that the old town was round Fremona. There are no traces of anything older than this fortress in or around Adoua, and it would seem that prior to the days of the Portuguese no town of any importance existed here. The name of Fremona was given to the place from Frumentius, the man who, according to Abyssinian legend, introduced Christianity into Abyssinia about the year 330 of our era. The account of Frumentius is decidedly legendary ; but the story, for want of a better, must be taken for what it is worth. Ruffinus is our authority for it, and he tells us how a merchant of the name of Meropius, with two slaves, Frumentius and Adesius, put in to Ethiopia on their way to India. Here Meropius died, and his two friends remained in Abyssinia, ingratiated themselves into the favour of the king and people, and then Frumentius returned to Alexandria and was created the first Bishop of Ethiopia by St. Athanasius, and on his return finally established the religion of Christ in the country. The story has distinctly its weak points, for the Abyssinians are, as we have seen, a race with considerable obstinacy, and it is scarcely probable that two slaves would obtain sufficient influence to change the religion of a whole country, and the story is in itself almost as mythical as that the Queen of Sheba and her son Menelek converted this country on their return from Jerusalem to Judaism. Almost at this very period, too, we

get the Greek inscription at Aksum, in which King Aizanes dedicates statues to Mars, who had befriended him in his wars. Still, however, by making allowances for legends, we may safely surmise that somewhere about this time a knowledge of Christianity spread in Ethiopia, and that, in 600 A.D., the nine Egyptian monks who came to Ethiopia, in a measure organised a Christian Church on the Alexandrian lines, which St. Tekla Haimanout, in 1255, afterwards established on pretty much the same basis as it is now.

The Portuguese found it convenient to believe in Frumentius, and called the fortress, which they built, Fremona, after him. Writing in 1621 to the general of the Jesuits at home, Father Almeyda says, 'The fortress, which was begun last year, is at last finished; they have also erected another tower, to which is also added battlements and watch towers all round. We have put up a flag on the top of this tower, the standard of the cross, which is so well made that every one comes to marvel at it.' The ruins of this fortress, abandoned and rapidly tumbling to pieces, are still to be seen on the hill of Fremona, near Adoua.

Father Paës, the great apostle of the Jesuits in Abyssinia, died at Fremona in 1622, and the Negous Susenyos in his grief threw himself on his tomb and wept bitterly.

Writing in 1624, Father Almeyda thus describes the progress of conversion: 'The emperor gives a great example to all, both in frequent attendance at sacraments and in visiting the church and listening

to preaching; often he communicates in sight of every one.' But at the same time he adds significantly that there are many rebels in the mountains of Amhara and Shoa. The emperor had now for some time past resided at Fremona, in order to be close to the Jesuit fathers and the new religion; but, at the same time, it is clear that, though powerful in the support of the Abyssinian monarch, who had thrown in his lot with the Jesuits, there was much discontent amongst the people. 'Evil reports were spread by the Ethiopian monks to the effect that the Roman Catholics gave to those who wished to communicate a bit of camel's brain, or of a hare, instead of the body of Christ.'

In Tigrè the Portuguese had two missions—one at Fremona, and another at Debarroa. It is a significant fact that in these letters there are very few allusions to Aksum and the great monastery there, the monks of which were undoubtedly extremely bitter against the new religion, and from this quarter probably came the ultimate downfall of the Jesuits. The Coptic Abouna was always ready to head a revolt. Father Almeyda says in another letter, 'We took leave of him to go to Fremona, where we arrived on the day of Saint Mary Magdalene, and were received with a great rejoicing and tears of joy, with salvos of musketry from the fortress, and the flying of many flags on the turrets of the towers'; and again, 'On February 12 was laid the first stone of a beautiful and large church which was to be built near the fortress, because that of the patriarch Oviedo, besides

being small, was far off from the house. It was done with a great sound of drums and salutes of arquebusses.'

Father Almeyda and the next patriarch, Father Alfonso Mendez, in their books allude to Aksum, stating it as their belief that it was the capital of the Queen of Sheba, and that the big obelisk standing there was her tomb. (Almeyda, bk. 1, ch. 22; Mendez, bk. 3, ch. 3.)

Three years after the death of Father Paës, Alfonso Mendez was sent out, at the request of the Emperor Susenyos, to act as patriarch of the Roman Catholic Church of Ethiopia. He was a typical Jesuit, hard and uncompromising, and on his arrival in Abyssinia in 1625 he set to work to organise the Church there on the strictest principles of orthodoxy. He was accompanied by Father Lobo, whose book on Abyssinia was translated by Dr. Johnson, for which he got the sum of five pounds. He had every support from the emperor and his brother, Ras Sela, who was Viceroy of Tigrè, in his desire to obliterate from the Abyssinians all their old rites and customs, and to substitute for them those of the Church of Rome. But amongst the people there was great discontent, and two years after the arrival of Mendez a rebellion broke out, headed by Tekla Giorgis, the emperor's son-in-law. Reports were spread that the Jesuits were in league with Ras Sela to make him emperor; but Susenyos, with unabated zeal for his friends the Jesuits, succeeded in putting down the rebellion, and his son-in-law was hung on a

tree; but, at the same time, the discontent was so marked throughout the whole of his dominions that he was obliged to allow liberty of conscience. To this the patriarch Mendez was bitterly opposed, and saw with undisguised disgust many of his proselytes lapsing into their old faith; but by this time Susenyos, who was getting old and feeble, was unable to regain for his friends their old ascendancy, and in June 1632 he abdicated, and died in the September of the same year, still maintaining to the last his belief in the Catholic faith and his love for the Jesuits. His death was the signal for a general revolt against the influence of the Jesuits; their uncompromising position had embittered them to the whole of the Abyssinian nation, and thus by their over-zeal they ruined their cause. Even their firm friend, Ras Sela, with the true spirit of an Ethiopian, deserted them and went over to the side of the young emperor, Fasiladas, who was in every way opposed to the Jesuits, and issued a decree that they should be expelled from his dominions. Many of them, with a praiseworthy zeal, elected to remain at their post, and all who did suffered martyrdom, and a few months after the death of Susenyos not a single trace of the Jesuits and their power was to be found throughout the length and breadth of Ethiopia.

For the remainder of that century no Europeans were allowed to visit Abyssinia, and every attempt on the part of the Jesuits to re-enter the country was futile.

In 1714 some Roman Catholic missionaries were

again well received, and established themselves at Gondar; but very soon evil reports were spread against them, probably by the Abyssinian clergy, who dreaded a renewal of their influence. It was reported that the bread they gave in the Sacrament was the marrow of dogs and pigs; the emperor who befriended them was poisoned, and in March 1718 all the missionaries were stoned at Gondar, an Ethiopian priest casting the first stone.

Thus ended the gallant attempt, which at one time was so nearly successful, to bring Ethiopia under the wing of the papal supremacy, and the result has undoubtedly been to close Abyssinia to European influence and to strengthen the tenacity with which the Abyssinian priesthood adhere to their time-honoured customs. •

## CHAPTER VII

## STAY AT ADOUA.

WE were warmly welcomed at Adoua by the Italian resident, Capitano-medico De Martino, who had lived alone for over a year at Adoua without seeing any of his fellow-countrymen, looking after the Italian interests in the Abyssinian empire. He was delighted to see us and talk with Europeans again, and during the days we stayed at Adoua he made us most comfortable.

His house and large garden were down by the stream, where the inhabitants of Adoua wash their clothes after a fashion peculiarly their own. They first dig a hole in the ground near the stream; into this they put a large skin to form a sort of basin; then they put in the clothes, tread them with their feet, and wash them with their native soap made out of the seeds of the *Percunia Abyssinica* ground and made into a paste, the washing properties of which are marvellous, and they call it *shipta*. The Abyssinians certainly are excellent botanists; they know of a tree the leaves of which stupefy fish when thrown into the water, so that they may be easily caught; they know the properties of the *koussou* for killing



tapeworms, and the medicinal properties of many other plants. Nevertheless, our friend De Martino is greatly valued amongst them for his medical skill. Most wounds are brought to him to be sewn up; most fevers are treated by him; but his chief hold over the people arises from the fact that with his own retort he can make his own spirits and liqueurs—and this is the way to the heart of an Abyssinian chief. A dozen of some choice liqueur sent opportunely to Ras Mangashah will settle a point of diplomacy which looked sufficiently grave. Hence the Capitano-medico at Adoua is distinctly a man of weight and importance.

I don't think I ever saw a prettier spot than Adoua, with its rocky mountains encircling it, with peaks as fantastic as any in the world—one crowned by an old prison, another by a convent. Its streams make the land around it fertile, and a few years back it was as flourishing as any place in Abyssinia. Now it is a series of ruined walls and deserted huts, a third only of the houses being inhabited, for pestilence, famine, and war have, during late years, visited Adoua and left it merely a wreck of what it once was.

On the morning after our arrival the Italian resident took me to pay a visit to the Dejetch, or governor of Adoua. The Abyssinian body politic is thus composed: Firstly, the Emperor, King of kings; secondly, the Ras, generally, but not always, crowned as vice-king of a province; thirdly, the Dejetch, or governor of a big town; and, fourthly, the Shoum, or headman of a village.

The Dejetch Ambeh of Adoua is a very important person, being a cousin of the reigning family. He received us with considerable dignity in a large round hut with grass spread over the floor and two or three Oriental carpets; all round the hut were horns inserted in the walls, on to which the great men in attendance on the Dejetch had hung their shields and other arms. The governor sat on an *angareb*, whilst the Italian resident and I were provided with chairs on either side of him. After various complimentary speeches we gradually passed into politics, and I was much struck with the curious metaphorical way in which these were discussed. Ras Alula was spoken of as the devil who came up like smoke from hell, and the Dejetch remarked that it would be necessary to put up a cross on either door to keep him out. Then they spoke of a recent victory over some of Ras Alula's men, and how they had fled, as before a swarm of bees. The allusions were all rather poetical and striking. Before leaving, it was insinuated to the Dejetch that we had a present for him, which we hoped to have the honour of presenting very shortly.

He sent us a lamb and thirty pieces of bread that very day as an earnest of his goodwill, and on the following afternoon, accompanied by my wife, I went to pay him another visit, my interpreter carrying the gifts mysteriously under the folds of his *shamma*. It was not exactly the hour we should have chosen to pay a visit to a royal prince, had we

thought about it, for it was just the hour at which he and his great men were breaking their fast. In Lent no one is supposed to eat more than once a day, and that meal is in the afternoon. The Dejetch and at least fifty of the principal men of Adoua were



HORN FOR RED PEPPER; WRIST BASKET FOR RED PEPPER;  
DISH COVER OF STRAW; STRAW BASKET

all seated in a tent, which was crowded to excess and stiflingly hot. They had before them baskets of bread, and the usual platters of a sauce of oil and red pepper, into which they dip the bread. I must say the Abyssinians are very clean eaters; they break off a piece of the bread without touching the rest

with their fingers, and every movement is graceful, even down to the lowest of the people—undoubtedly the heritage of a high civilisation in bygone days. It is just the same when they eat their raw meat; they are graceful, and each man only touches the piece he intends to eat with his own fingers as he cuts it off with his sword. When the governor ate, every one rushed up to have the honour of hiding him with his *shamma* from public gaze, and of wiping his hands with their robes when he had his hands washed after eating. It was a silent, and to us a very interesting, meal. Poor things! they must have been very hungry, and yet they all kept their tempers admirably. When, however, the *tedje* horns had been passed round, their tongues became loosened, and conversation flowed freely.

When the process of eating was over, and the meanest amongst them had swallowed his last mouthful, the Dejetch evidently began to get curious to see what presents we had brought him. He made a sign to the *agarafi*, the master of the ceremonies, who stood at the tent door, stick in hand, to order the guests to depart, which they all did without a murmur. The order 'to depart and return again presently' is very strictly observed in an Abyssinian household; even the emperor's son obeys it; for an Abyssinian, whoever he may be, is considered as lord in his own house. The Dejetch displayed no emotion at the things we gave him until we handed him a watch, and then he could not restrain his inordinate delight. We showed him how to wind it up,

open it, &c., and though he transferred all the other objects to his servant to be taken away, he never let the watch out of his hand.

Presents were quite the order of the day at Adoua, and we were given several nice things by the Italian resident, including a beautiful *mergef*, or prince's robe, which is distinguished from the ordinary *shamma* by having the red stripe beautifully woven in various patterns. At Adoua we also acquired some very good pieces of Abyssinian basket work. Their great baskets for holding the cakes of bread are intricately woven with different coloured grasses and are exceedingly pretty. They also make their dish-covers in the same way, and their red pepper pots, with a hole in the middle, so that the servants may wear them on their wrists as they carry their dishes to the table. This intricate basket weaving has its parallel in Nubia and Lower Egypt.

We visited a great many houses in Adoua, making interesting little purchases at most of them, including an embroidered lady's costume (*Vide* illustration, p. 23), with a very pretty pattern worked in three coloured silks. There are some good houses in Adoua, though most of them are now falling into ruins. Some of them are square, with upper stories and towers; and I think the influence of the Portuguese, who constructed the neighbouring fortress of Fremona, must also have been felt in house architecture in the town. Ras Alula possesses a particularly fine set of huts in Adoua in a large space inclosed by a wall, and his principal dwelling hut

has a roof of a character which I had never seen before; it is made of bamboos, very neatly put together, through which are interwoven shreds of red, blue, and white silk, giving to the whole a very rich and decorative appearance.

We got a leather water-jug at one of the houses we visited—a form of jug which is widely distributed



LEATHER WATER-JUG



SILVER SEAL

in Africa, and is universal in Abyssinia, strongly reminding one of the shape of the water-bouget in heraldry. At another house we annexed a great man's silver seal with a cross in the centre and the legend around it.—‘This is the seal of Fitaurari (General) Dabalque.’ Every great man who can afford it has his seal, which he puts at the top of any letter he may have written for him by a *deftera*, or public scribe.

We paid visits to all sorts and conditions of men at Adoua, to the Dejetch of princely rank, to the *negadè*, or merchant, who moves in quite a different class of society, and to the more humble peasant, from all of whom we received the greatest kindness, and all of whom were continually asking us, 'When are the English coming again to Abyssinia to give us good government, and a time of peace?'

Every Saturday there is a market at Adoua, in the big flat space near to what is popularly known as the royal garden. Here we could study the commodities of the country at their best. There were sellers of pepper, soap seeds, umbrellas, *shammas*, shields, and swords. There were sellers of honey, chillies, and salt, the latter in long thin blocks, which is used for money. When you do not want to give a Maria Theresa dollar for an object, you buy bars of salt, and thus arrive at a negotiable article. But we always found it most difficult to make purchases in this way. At the market we saw many mutilated men, who for political reasons had been deprived of their right hands and left feet, and who invariably become beggars; for Abyssinians are distinctly cruel, and do not seem to care to support a maimed relation. From the market we came triumphantly home with a long sword, with an angular curve in the middle—a very ancient pattern—the scabbard of which, of stamped leather, is made particularly broad to admit of the curve passing in. The scarcity of fodder and grain in the Adoua market was most remarkable; we could not get any oats for our

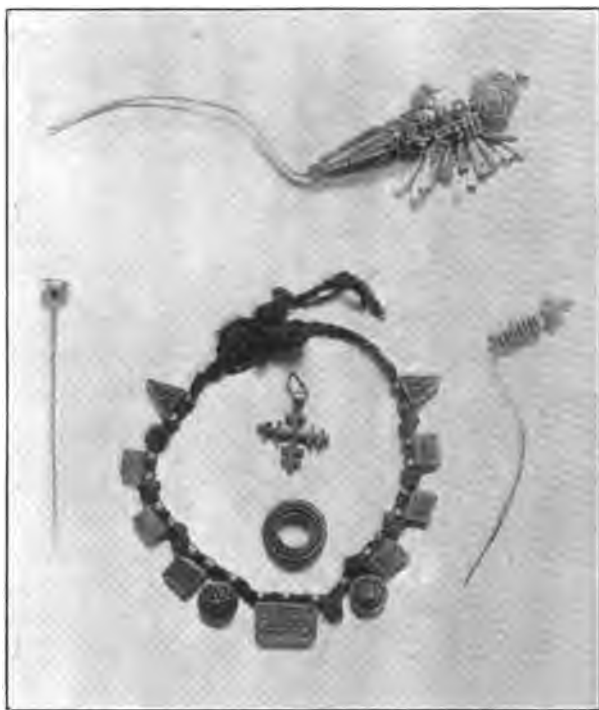
mules, which wanted them badly, nor any flour to make ourselves bread with. The harvest had all been destroyed, they said, and there was none to be had.

We visited one or two leather workers when at Adoua. One of them had his tiny shop up a flight of steps, and there was no room to enter; so we stood on the steps and inspected his goods. When new, the leather saddle-cloths and fittings for the head-gear look remarkably vulgar, green, red, and yellow leather being cut out in intricate patterns—a green cross, or house, or lion on a red ground, and so forth. When old and tarnished they look remarkably well. I never could make up my mind to buy a new one, and never could persuade any one to sell an old one; so we came home minus these characteristic articles of Abyssinian manufacture. Oddly enough, Abyssinian leather work reminded us strongly of that in Persia, and, probably, in years long gone by, the Abyssinians learnt this art from that source. Then, again, the leather worker makes cases of stamped leather for *tedge* horns, for carrying knives and household implements in, and for putting charms and books in. Altogether, I think the leather workers of Adoua have as large a field for their enterprise as any one.

Then there are the silversmiths, cunning artificers in filigree and embossed work, who supply the Abyssinian ladies with their trinkets and their charm cases. There are a great many of these in Adoua, and inasmuch as no woman, however poor, is without some silver work, and the well-to-do



pile it on in ostentatious profusion, there is plenty of opening for workmen in this trade. Every woman wears three little silver crosses tightly bound round her forehead, and small solitaire earrings of silver in her ears. These ornaments are



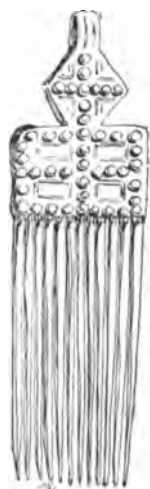
ABYSSINIAN JEWELS

Hair-pin for parting hair; Necklace; Cross; Ring for Neck;  
Hair-pin

*de rigueur* in Abyssinia; but bangles, armlets, bracelets, anklets, neck charms, hair-pins, rings of silver are indulged in according to the wealth and dignity of the wearer. We never saw any precious stones worn in Abyssinia, nor any ornaments of gold.

So the silversmith has a monopoly of the female vanities, which are as rampant in Abyssinia as elsewhere. At Adoua we acquired a fine neck-gear for a mule, decorated with little bosses of silver and the pendant bells. This belonged to a person of distinction, humbler people having theirs only made of brass. But a beautiful filigree mitre, which we coveted extremely, was not to be bought. It was one of the best pieces of Abyssinian silver work we saw, and we left it behind most regretfully.

One afternoon, as I was wandering about Adoua alone, a well-to-do man accosted me, and, rather against my will, insisted on taking me to his house. It was a very good house, and singularly sweet smelling, for the floor was strewn with fragrant herbs, which sent up a delicious odour when trodden upon. He introduced me to his wife, and gave me *tedge* and liqueurs, for I was rather helpless, not knowing enough Abyssinian to refuse politely. He showed me his books and his wife's silver ornaments, and when this rather trying visit was over I hurried home to be scolded by my interpreter for keeping low company, 'for,' said he, 'he is only a *negadè*,' or merchant. I was never permitted to see my self-made friend again. In many respects I feel sure we frequently acted in such an undignified manner that we shocked the Abyssinians. They never could understand why we pre-



BRASS HAIR-COMB

ferred to walk when we could ride, or why we liked to stroll about by ourselves, when our supposed rank necessitated a retinue of servants.

Adoua would be nothing if it was not for its churches ; two very conspicuous ones crown two hills, beneath which the houses nestle. One of these is the cathedral, to which we took an unreasonable



CATHEDRAL OF ADOUA

dislike, owing to its tin roof, which catches the eye at every turn you take in Adoua. The precincts of this church are, however, very fine ; the large outer inclosure, in which there is a daily market, except on Saturdays, when the big market takes place outside the town, opens into an inner inclosure through a handsome gateway, in the centre of which stands

the circular church. There are treasure chambers, priests' quarters, and numerous buildings around this, and thither, in times of danger, the inhabitants



TOMB OF BISHOP KYRILLOS, ADOUA

of Adoua take their valuable property for protection, for no marauder, however strong he may be, dares to interfere with the sanctity of the church.

But the church which interested us most, and



PORCH OF THE CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, ADOUA

which we frequently visited, was down in the hollow to the east of Adoua. It is dedicated to '*Madhane*

*Alam*, or the Saviour of the World, and is the most perfect specimen of the circular Abyssinian church which we saw in all our tour. The outer inclosure shuts in a very large space, and you pass through two very handsome porches to enter the second inclosure, which is planted with shady trees. There is a fine bell-tower and treasure house attached, and behind it is the square mausoleum of the Coptic Abouna, Kyrillos by name, who built the church at his own expense, and who was murdered on the road to the Mareb a few years ago. There is so much that is like modern Persia in the architecture of the subsidiary buildings—the reddish, mud-bespattered walls, and the *bala khaneh* over the door of the porch—that one is tempted to believe that at some time or another Persia and Persian art exercised some influence over the country of Prester John. Of course many Persians find their way to the Red Sea on their journeys to Mecca, and one cannot help thinking that, during the more prosperous days of Abyssinia, Persian artificers found their way up on to the high plateau of Abyssinia, and exercised an influence like the Portuguese did in their day on the crude art of the country.

The church of the Saviour of the World is very big, at least 50 feet in diameter, and is divided, as usual, into the three conventional divisions; it stands on a raised platform with a sunk fence around it, and the thatched roof is supported by very substantially-built columns. The wood work of the porch is very fine; small blocks of wood, each with an elabo-

rate pattern of Byzantine style, are inserted into all the angles, acting as supports and decoration to the doors; the outer court was strewn with grass, and contained a collection of drums and musical instruments for the services. The pictures, too, are good and elaborate—one especially, of Pharaoh and his host drowning in the Red Sea, with their heads just



CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, ADOUA

above water, struck us as peculiarly realistic and quaint, whilst the crowds beneath the water are represented by neat rows of five swords or six guns.

It was here in the church of the Saviour of the World that I espied a picture cast on one side, for the colours were somewhat faded, which I faintly hoped to acquire. At first our offers were received with contempt, but again and again we sent our interpreter, and with him ten pieces of silver, the sight

of which eventually overcame the priest's dread of mutilation, and the evening before our final departure from Adoua the picture was ours. Our interpreter himself was terrified at what he had done. 'We must not breathe a word of the transaction, even to the Italians,' he said; 'we must bury the treasure at the bottom of our deepest bag'; and to all these regulations we gladly acquiesced, for we knew the great difficulty of acquiring these things in Abyssinia, and the danger to which we all should be exposed if our transaction should be discovered, and I am pretty nearly sure that this picture which is now in the British Museum is the first of its kind which has reached Europe. (*Vide* frontispiece.)

The picture is 7 ft. high by 5 ft. 8 in. broad, and is painted on a piece of silk canvas. The crucifixion, which occupies the centre of the picture, is peculiarly Byzantine in the thin, angular shape of the body, the drooping head, and pallid hue, and might be well a production of Mount Athos were it not for its surroundings. As is usual in these Abyssinian pictures, evil-doers are side-faced, good people full-face, as is evidenced in the compartment allotted to the flagellation. Apparently, the subjects to the right of the picture represent scenes before the Passion; those to the left, after the Resurrection. One of them depicts the quaint Eastern legend of the Christ being let down into Hades by a cord, and Adam and Eve receiving the body. At the foot of the cross is the skull of Adam, conformable to the Eastern legend that Shem and Melchisedek took the head

of Adam and buried it in Golgotha ; over the skull trickle three streams of blood, symbolically washing away the sins of the first Adam. The figures of the



ENTRANCE TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES, CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR  
OF THE WORLD, ADOUA

Maries and Joseph at the foot of the cross are peculiarly elaborate, and the embroidered garments worn by the women are of distinctly local colouring. The



three angels holding three vases to the three wounds would look as if in some form or another the legend of the Holy Grail had penetrated into Abyssinia. Far above, in the left-hand corner of the picture, is painted the devil fleeing in terror from this world. Altogether, this picture is a most interesting embodiment of the Abyssinian conception of the Passion, and shows clearly the Greek influence which was at work in this Church. As for the minor details of local colouring, they are amusing, and produce grotesque anachronisms. The Roman soldiers have all got their matchlock rifles; the spear which pierces the side of Christ is an exact counterpart of an Abyssinian spear; the Roman soldier has an Abyssinian toe-stirrup. The priests who dance to welcome Christ as He enters Jerusalem have got their drums, their *sistra*, their pastoral staves, and their fly-flaps, and the trappings of the mules are entirely Abyssinian. Yet, taken as a whole, this picture is purely Byzantine in character, and shows beyond a doubt the source from which the sacred art of Abyssinia has been derived.

The environs of Adoua are very pleasant for walking; just opposite rises the great mass of Shelloda, which the inhabitants liken to the back of a horse. On it a German geologist is said to have discovered gold in large quantities, but he died, and his secret died with him. Two streams water Adoua—the Assam and the Gogo. The ruined king's palace and the ruined Portuguese settlement of Fremona crown heights about half an hour's dis-

tance from the town. Given a settled government and power of developing itself, Adoua might be again what it once was, the most favoured spot in Abyssinia; but, as it is, constant rebellions and insecurity of life and property have paralysed everything about it.

## CHAPTER VIII

*EXPEDITION TO YEHA AND ITS ARCHÆOLOGICAL RESULTS*

WE were very anxious to make an expedition from Adoua for two nights to Yeha, whilst awaiting a reply from Ras Mangashah, giving us permission to proceed to Aksum. From the fragments of letters copied by Salt, I was led to believe that we should find Himyaritic inscriptions there, and thereby be able to establish beyond a doubt early Arabian influence and colonisation in Abyssinia. Alvarez also, the most reliable of guides, went into ecstasies over a ruin there, and our Greek fellow-travellers had also heard wonderful reports of the things to be found there. Dejetch Ambeh gave us permission to go, and an escort of a few soldiers to insure our safety, and the results, as they appear in the following pages, I think will show that the importance of the ruins of Yeha have in no way been exaggerated; and there is no question about it that they are of greater age and greater importance than those of Aksum itself. It is a ride of about five hours from Adoua to Yeha, and part of the road is very difficult; so we set off as early as possible one morning in the direction of the peaky mountains to the north-east of Adoua.

The first object of interest which we passed was a big sycamore tree, about a quarter of a mile out of the town, where executions usually take place; the town gibbet, in fact—luckily, just then without an occupant. To our left we passed the church of St. Michael, built a few years ago by Ras Michael, buried in its grove, and then we ascended the hills and crossed over a ridge, which brought us to a broad valley completely hedged in by an amphitheatre of precipitous mountains. A stream runs through this valley, the Mai Veless, and the soil looks extremely fertile; but it is a sad instance of Abyssinian deterioration. Ruined villages are seen in all directions, with the customary church in the middle, almost hidden by its sacred grove, which has turned into jungle. Apparently, at no very distant period, every inch of this valley had been cultivated; now only on a few acres at the upper end, where the valley is narrow and irrigation easy, is any cultivation carried on.

All the surrounding hills have been terraced for cultivation, and present much the same appearance as the hills in Greece and Asia Minor, which have been neglected for centuries; but nowhere in Greece or Asia Minor have I ever seen such an enormous extent of terraced mountains as in this Abyssinian valley. Hundreds and thousands of acres must here have been under the most careful cultivation, right up almost to the tops of the mountains, and now nothing is left but the regular lines of the sustaining walls, and a few trees dotted about here and

there. This valley is most completely shut in, quite such an one as one can imagine Rasselas to have lived in. We lunched and reposed by the side of the stream, and then commenced an exceedingly toilsome ascent on foot, up which the mules scrambled with difficulty, by a road which has evidence of having once been good and carefully engineered, but which in these later times is a mass of fallen boulders and small stones. Another equally precipitous descent on



VIEW OF YEHA

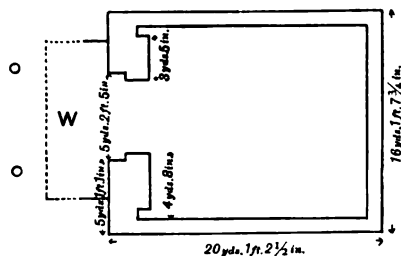
the other side of the ridge brought us into the valley of Yeha, and after another hour's ride we reached our destination, about three o'clock in the afternoon.

The first sight of Yeha impressed us exceedingly. On a rounded knoll stands the large ruin, a massive piece of ancient masonry; by the side of it is a more modern church, built out of ancient fragments; around all this is the usual sacred grove and the wall of inclosure. We pitched our tents just outside this wall, under a far-spreading sycamore, and looked down on the extensive modern village buried in ver-

ture, and around it fields with flourishing crops, showing a degree of prosperity which we had seen nowhere else in Abyssinia. Behind the village rise precipitous rocky mountains of every form and shape. The inhabitants of Yeha were exceedingly inquisitive about us, but at the same time polite. Next morning they held a court of justice under the tree, and in close proximity to our tents, accompanied by the fearful screaming and gesticulations common in Abyssinia on such occasions. We had nothing to do but to show that the noise annoyed us, and the headmen ordered the court to remove to a distance, and left us in peace. The priests of the monastery were somewhat jealous of the close scrutiny to which we submitted the ruins; but, on receipt of a few dollars, they showed us everything, and assisted us in discovering many inscriptions. The superstitious believe that these old Sabæan inscriptions point to where treasure is hidden, and watched us narrowly when we walked about, believing that we should find the spots; and one widow woman who had three inscriptions built into her house most reluctantly allowed us to take squeezes, gradually working herself up into hysterics, and eventually refusing to accept the gratuity we offered her through a belief that we should work magic with them and bring disaster upon her.

The great building on the knoll is one of special interest, being the centre of the old civilisation as it here existed, and having been fortunately preserved to us, owing to the fact that it is within the sacred precincts, and that it has a Christian church within it,

now deserted. It is 20 yds. 1 ft.  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ins. in length, and 16 yds. 1 ft.  $7\frac{3}{4}$  ins. in width. On the east side



PLAN OF TEMPLE, YEHA

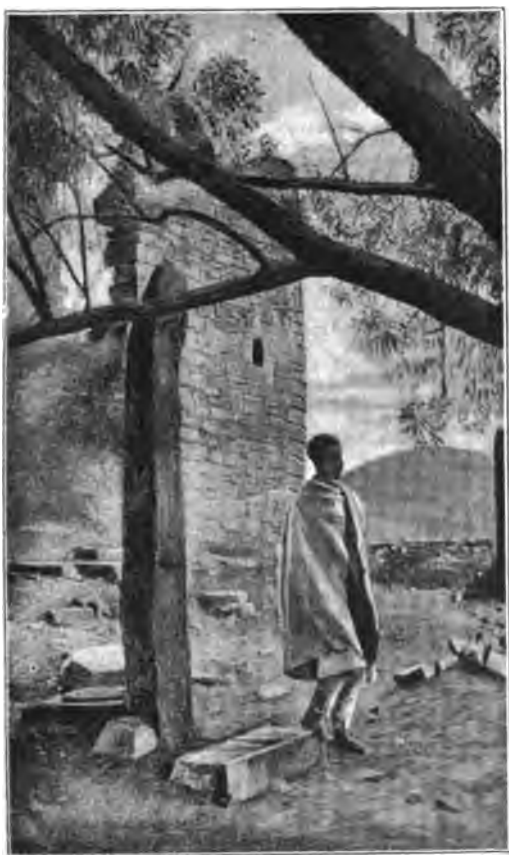
there are preserved fifty-two courses, and on the top of this ran the pattern given in the illustration. The building was probably about 50 ft. in height, and there are no traces of a window in it. The stones are large, and put together without cement; the four bottom courses



TEMPLE AT YEHA

give a batter of 3 ins. each, and the corner stones are 3 ft.  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. in length, 28 ins. thick; they are all 'drafted stones'—that is to say, with a carefully

chiselled line edging each stone. The stone is a hard yellowish limestone, and the preservation of the whole is excellent. To the west was a large doorway, 5 yds. 2 ft. 5 ins. in width, with holes for

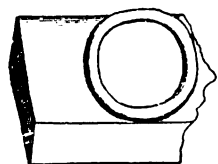


MONOLITHS BEFORE THE TEMPLE AT YEHA

hinges; and here, too, are marks of fire. In the interior on either side of the doorway are two recesses; otherwise, inside the temple is simple in the extreme.



Before this entrance there was apparently a vestibule, some few stones of which are in their places ; but the greater part of this wall is of late construction, and let into it are two fragments, with Himyaritic inscriptions upon them. In front of the vestibule stood two rough monoliths, at the base of one of which is an altar with a circular disk on it, presumably, from the analogy of those at Aksum, for receiving the blood of slaughtered victims. In the little ruined church inside the walls there are several decorated fragments, notably a fragment of a reddish sandstone column with many grooves. A few yards from this building is the modern church, square, and constructed like that at Asmara ; it has been built out of the ruins, and one interesting little fragment let into the walls gives us what is evidently a portion of a monolith, like those at Aksum, with windows and battlements represented thereon. Much soil has here accumulated all round, and a dense growth of reeds, and I am convinced that a thorough excavation of this spot would yield very interesting results



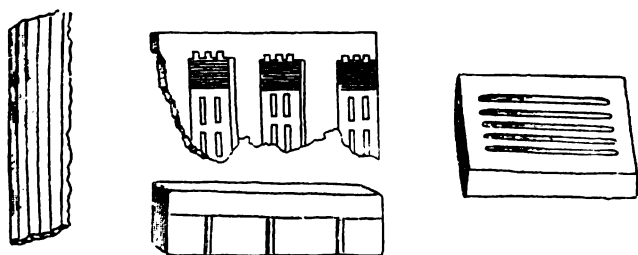
ALTAR AT BASE OF MONOLITH, YEHA

for the student of Sabæan art. The priests had two Sabæan inscriptions hidden away in this church, which after much difficulty we succeeded in seeing—one, a portion of a very richly-carved stone, with Himyaritic letters in relief (No. 7, p. 237). It appears to agree in height, and in the decoration which runs along the top, with the fragment inserted in the wall of the

vestibule, and probably ran along above the entrance before it was destroyed.

My impression is strongly in favour of this building having been a temple dedicated to the old Sabæan cult of sun and star worship. Like such buildings, it has had no windows; the monoliths and altar in front also point to the same thing, and the fact that the sacredness of the spot has been handed down to our days is also in favour of its having been originally a temple rather than a fortress.

Outside the inclosure one sees plainly how extensive the place must have been in ancient days. On



FRAGMENTS FROM YEHA

every side are fragments of columns, dressed stones, and other objects of interest let into the walls of the cottages, and about three hundred yards from the temple on the other side of the village stood a building, only a few stones of which are *in situ*, and these are of colossal size, rivalling the colossal stones of any early Greek or Etruscan building. This building is now almost buried in the ground, and would be an exceedingly interesting spot to excavate.

Modern accounts of the antiquities of Yeha

are very few. Salt gives us a little description of it, and copied one or two of the inscriptions; but in those days the Himyaritic script was unknown. Alvarez, in 1520, also visited it, and his quaint little description is worth quoting here. He calls the spot Abafacem, and thus describes it: 'There is a very good church of Our Lady, well built. Close to this church is a very great and beautiful tower, noticeable both for its well-proportioned height as for its thickness and exquisite masonry; but it has already begun to fall into ruins, though built very strongly, and of hewn stone, covered and enriched with such excellent work that it displays nothing less than a royal grandeur, such as I have never seen another like. This tower is surrounded by houses which match well with it, with both good walls and terraces above, like residences of great lords.' He goes on to tell us the Abyssinian legend that the ark of the covenant was kept here prior to its removal to Aksum, and that 'Queen Candace chose this place as her residence because her home was not far from here, where she became a Christian, which does not seem at all improbable.' Also Alvarez was struck, as we were, with the unusual fertility of the neighbourhood of Yeha, and the conduits of water with which they irrigated their fields. The Abyssinian legend is that it was founded by Abba Asfè, one of the nine priests who went from Egypt to regulate the Church of Abyssinia in the year 600. But the Himyaritic inscriptions, and the construction itself, prove this to be erroneous. It is, however, possible

that Abba Asfè built the church, and made use of the ancient building and its precincts to found a monastic establishment.

It struck me as curious that such important remains as those we saw at Yeha should be unmentioned by early geographers, who were well acquainted with Aksum further inland as the capital of Ethiopia Troglodytica. However, after careful examination into the question, I think the difficulty has been thoroughly solved.

*Firstly.* A certain Nonnosus was sent by the Emperor Justinian as ambassador to the King of the Aksumites (A.D. 533) to seek his alliance against Persia. Gibbon<sup>1</sup> describes the grandeur of his reception by the Negous, the chariot drawn by four elephants superbly caparisoned, the gold chains, collars, and bracelets richly adorned with precious stones, in use amongst the Ethiopians in those days; and Nonnosus has left behind him a fragment describing his journey inland, retained for us in the 'Photii Bibliotheca,' which, after recounting the various adventures by the way, gives us the following practical piece of geographical information (Sect. 35): 'Aksum is fifteen days from Adulis. Shortly before his arrival at Aksum there appeared to Nonnosus and those with him a great wonder at the spot called Ave, which is between the city of Aksum and Adulis, a great quantity of elephants, about 5,000 collected together.' Now, the ruins of Yeha are undoubtedly on the ancient road between Adulis and Aksum.

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, vol. vii., ch. xlii.

*Secondly.* If we take the great Adulitan inscription, unfortunately lost to us, but which was copied by the monk Cosmas Indicopleustes at the instigation of Negous Kaleb of Abyssinia, we get much information with regard to the geography of this part of the world. This inscription is in two parts; the first refers to Ptolemy Euergetes and his conquests (B.C. 247–222); about the second part it is doubtful as to whom it refers, though to my mind it seems to relate the victories of some king or general from without, who from his basis at Adulis conquered the whole of Abyssinia. After mentioning certain towns conquered near Adulis, certain words occur which are supposed to be interpolated, ‘after crossing the Nile,’<sup>1</sup> because it was impossible to account for them. Then the conquest of Ava is mentioned, and certain other towns, not mentioning Aksum; then a second passage of the Nile, and the conquest of the kings of Semen in the snow mountains. Now, this geography is absolutely correct. After crossing the Mareb, one of the Abyssinian sources of the Nile, the first place would be Yeha or Ava, about twelve miles distant; then the Tacazzy would be the second passage of the Nile, beyond which are the mountains of Semen or Semyen, as they are pronounced, which we saw with our own eyes were heavily covered with snow, as the inscription describes. They are 15,000 feet in height, and are used still, as Cosmas tells us they were in his day, for the detention of political prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> Dean Vincent's *Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients*.

Hence we have here two allusions to a place called Ave or Ava, just where Yeha now stands. To account for this name of Ave, geographers have suggested Adoua as a possibility; but then there are no ruins of any sort at Adoua, and it at once occurred to me that the ruined fortress must be Ava, destroyed possibly in the days of the Ptolemies, and the capital of Ethiopia Troglodytica before the town of Aksum was built. Many points besides the name seemed to confirm this theory—the obvious antiquity of the building, the rude monoliths, and the Himyaritic inscriptions—and then absolute confirmation arrived from Professor D. H. Müller, who, in one of the inscriptions found at Yeha, read the words, ‘*His house or temple Awa*’ (*vide* p. 235). Hence we have Ava as the principal city of a Sabæan colonisation, with a temple and monoliths and sun worship, conquered by an overwhelming army which spread over Ethiopia, the victories of which are recorded on the Adulitan stone, whereas Aksum is not mentioned; and, as we shall show in a subsequent chapter, the monoliths and ruins of Aksum bear obvious traces of a Græco-Egyptian civilisation, influencing a people originally given to sun worship, the outcome of which has been the elaborate sequence of decorated monoliths which we shall discuss at Aksum.

The name Ava is, as Professor Müller suggests, doubtless connected with the Sabæan worship of Baal-Ava, and the name may be also traced in the Avalitic Gulf and the Avalites considerably further

south at Zeila. Claudius Ptolemy (4 g) tells us, 'The whole coast which is near Arabia and the Avalitic Gulf is universally known as the Troglodyte region as far as Mount Elephas, in which dwell both the Adulitæ and Avalitæ.' These Aualitæ or Avalitæ were great importers of myrrh, aromatic woods, ivory and skins into Sabæa, whence they were carried to Europe, and it appears evident that they were a colony of Arabian traders who settled here, and brought with them their language and religious rites, and had a fortress town at Yeha, a most advantageous spot for commerce with the interior. The removal of this capital to Aksum will account for the absence of the name Ava in the works of later geographers, and likewise the existence of the name Ava and not Aksum on the Adulitan stone will in like manner be explained.

I have already, and so has Alvarez, called attention to the altogether peculiar condition of fertility which existed at Yeha, whereas all the lands round Adoua and the neighbouring valleys are deserted and uncultivated, though offering exactly the same facilities as the valley of Yeha. On inquiry we were told that this was due to the existence of extensive caves in the hills above Yeha, into which the inhabitants drive their cattle, and in which they store their grain when marauding parties and danger threaten them. Now, Ava was the capital of the Ethiopians, who dwelt in caves. The Troglodytæ, according to Agatharcides (ap. Diod. 130, § 3, iii. 32, 33), were cave dwellers, shepherds with separate chiefs and with

princes of tribes. Their habitations were not merely clefts in the rocks, but carefully wrought vaults laid out in cloisters and squares, like the catacombs at Naples, whither in the rainy season they retired with their flocks and their herds. This is sufficient to prove to us that the ancient idea of the so-called cave dwellers was not that of wild savages, but of a people who had made considerable advance in the arts. Professor Sayce has shown from Egyptian hieroglyphics that Troglodyte was a name coined by the Greeks to fit in with the idea of their dwelling in caves (τρώγλη), whereas the name is not Greek but local, and should be Trogodytes without the *l*. The only one fact which is certain is that the Sabæan tribe who had Ava for a capital were known by the Greeks as people who took refuge in caves, and it is a curious coincidence that the inhabitants of Yeha who dwell around this ruined capital should do the same thing still.

Our stay at Yeha was one of absorbing interest, and every moment of our time was occupied in taking squeezes of the inscriptions, photographs, and measurements. Being so near the church we could slip in at any moment, and during the hot hours of the day, when the heat of the tent was almost unbearable, we had our meals in the gateway of the sacred shrine off a slab of marble which had once occupied a prominent part in the old Sabæan building. The tree was shady, but it was the meeting place of every conceivable species of urchin, and hence, for the purposes of repose, quite impossible. This space on the



knoll corresponds to the village green at home ; here the inhabitants assemble, as I have said, to discuss justice, prior to the cases being taken to Adoua for final decision ; here they bring their dead and wail over them prior to burial within the sacred precincts ; here they hold the banquet of the dead, the *teskar*, for which poor people economise all their lives so that their souls may be freed from purgatory ; here they pass most of the time which is not engaged in tilling the fields, and during the day it is a pleasant enough spot ; but, alas ! at night we found it quite the reverse. Probably it is owing to the fertility of the place, and the better prospect of securing for themselves the necessary means of sustenance, that an enormous number of hyenas is attracted to Yeha. We had a sheep given to us by the headman of the place, which these beasts especially coveted. So our men had to be on the watch all night, burning constant fires, and occasionally firing on the troops of these noxious animals, which made night hideous with their howlings a few yards below our camp. They only succeeded in carrying off the remains of our dinner.

Certainly Yeha is one of the best places we saw in Abyssinia, with its rich crops of chillies, oats, and various kinds of grain growing in the fields around the village, though it was the dry season, owing to the copious supply of water and the elaborate system of irrigation. In the fields stand straw huts on piles, in which the guardians of these crops sit to protect their produce.

We would fain have stayed a little longer at Yeha; but, owing to the disturbed state of the country, I had promised the Italian resident that we should only be two nights away from Adoua; so on the third day we sorrowfully said good-bye to this interesting place, and, without let or hindrance, reached our destination, the hospitable roof of Captain De Martino.

And it was well we did so, for on the following day arrived the alarming news that hostilities had broken out again between Ras Mangashah and Ras Alula; that the latter, with a considerable body of men, was marching on Adoua, and that, under these circumstances, we were in imminent peril. Captain De Martino solemnly communicated this news to us on Sunday night, bidding us pack up at once, with a view to flying to the frontier at daybreak. Everything was excitement and terror; the courtyard was crowded with armed men, who ostensibly came to protect us; though, if Ras Alula had come, I do not think they would have raised a finger in our defence. Some said Ras Alula was only a few hours off; that he was cutting off the right hands and left feet of all his opponents who fell into his power. 'He is sure to cut mine off,' said the terrified Italian, 'for I am an old enemy of his; but I expect he will only take you prisoners to the mountains and demand a heavy ransom.' This news was certainly not encouraging. Sleep was, of course, out of the question, and when our packing was done we sat with anxious faces and at terrible tension through the dreary hours of dark-

ness awaiting events. In the middle of the night news of a more reassuring character reached us. Ras Alula had abandoned his intention of attacking Adoua, and was making for his mountain in Tembien, which he had victualled and fortified at the very time he was swearing at Aksum eternal friendship with Ras Mangashah. Such are the Abyssinians. Accordingly, we abandoned the intention of flying early the next day, and determined to await the return of the governor, Dejetch Ambeh, who had been summoned in all haste from Aksum, and to act on his advice.

News confirming the retreat of Ras Alula to his mountain came in next morning, and the governor, who arrived about ten o'clock, gave it as his opinion that the danger was, for the time being, averted, but that the greatest care would have to be taken to watch the movements of Ras Alula.

After a lengthy discussion with the Italian resident, we determined to proceed to Aksum the following day, promising to return whenever he sent us a messenger, and be prepared at any moment for flight. 'Perhaps you may be only able to stay two days; perhaps you may be able to stay a fortnight,' he said. 'All depends on the attitude of Ras Alula and Ras Mangashah; it would be a pity for you to have come so far to see Aksum and to have to return without doing so.' This was exactly what we had thought ourselves, and though prudence rather prompted us to return to the Italian frontier, desire

to accomplish our end got the better of us, and we hastily commenced our preparations for going to Aksum on the following day, inwardly wishing ourselves well out of Abyssinia and the mysterious network of treachery which surrounded us.

## CHAPTER IX

*THE SACRED CITY OF THE ETHIOPIANS*

As far back as Abyssinian annals go, far away into a hazy legendary period, when Christianity was planting itself on the ruins of a Sabæan paganism, Aksum was looked upon as the sacred city of the Ethiopians; and there is little doubt that it was the centre of this part of Ethiopia for at least two centuries before our era. Nonnosus, whom we have already quoted as the ambassador to the King of Ethiopia from Justinian, tells us that 'Aksum is both the greatest city and the capital of all Ethiopia.' The anonymous author of the *Periplus*, A.D. 64, knew Aksum as the capital of this kingdom, and the inscriptions we found confirm this point. There is no doubt that, after the destruction of Ava, the fortress city of the first Sabæan colony in Ethiopia, the capital was fixed at Aksum; and down to this day, despite the frequent change of capitals and the many vicissitudes of Ethiopia, Aksum has retained its place as the sacred city and the centre of their curious and time-honoured Christian Church. Firmly does the Abyssinian of to-day believe that in the innermost recesses of the Cathedral at Aksum is kept

the original '*tabout*,' or ark of the covenant, which Menelek, the son of Solomon, is reported to have brought with him from Jerusalem; and in this legend one sees, probably, a faint glimmer of truth. At first (says the legend) it was kept at Yeha (Ava), and then removed to Aksum. This is in conformity with existing proof. When Ava was destroyed the *arcana* of their religion and the capital of the kingdom was transferred to Aksum.

In this chapter I propose to describe Aksum as it is now, and then to enter at greater length into the archæology of its wonderful obelisks and their history.

We left Adoua early in the morning for our ride to Aksum; it is only twelve miles over a broken country of no very interesting aspect, except when we looked back and got a glimpse of the glorious range of the Adoua mountains behind us. On an isolated peak before us was perched the monastery of St. Pantaleon, one of many round Aksum, where the Ethiopian monks pass their dreary lives in close proximity to the sacred city. This peak is the end of a spur which juts into the plain, or high plateau, extending right away to the Tacazzeh river, brown and dreary in its aspect, treeless and uncultivated, save in favoured corners. Miles and miles away to the south, across the Tacazzeh, in the hazy distance, rise the stupendous mountains of Semyen covered with snow. I wish here to add my testimony as an eye-witness on this point. Father Lobo says he saw snow thereon. Bruce denies it, and

laughs at Father Lobo. During the ten days we were able to stay at Aksum we had a view of the Semyen range each day, and the snow thereon was unmistakable. The fact is important, for the previously quoted Adulitan inscription thus alludes to it: 'The nations of Semen beyond the Nile (Tacazzeh) dwell in inaccessible and snow-clad mountains, in which there are snowstorms, and cold, and snows so deep that a man sinks in up to the knees.' From what we saw from Aksum I should say that this ancient account on the Adulitan stone is substantially correct.

The town of Aksum nestles in a kloof or valley running up into the above-mentioned spur; it is shaded in parts by massive sycamores, and, being nearly 1,000 feet higher than Adoua, the climate is delightfully cool and fresh. It is 7,545 feet above the level of the sea, and has a vast plain below it, where rise streams which eventually flow into the Nile. Even in the dry season we saw lots of deep pools filled with water on this plain. The features of the place are very marked; firstly, one comes across the large, sacred inclosure, nearly a mile in circumference, thickly planted with trees and reeds, in the centre of which rises the cathedral, surrounded by the monastic buildings and the residence of the *etchigeh*, or bishop. This inclosure occupies nearly the whole of the entrance to the valley; beyond it, on the hill slopes, are the houses of the inhabitants, whilst running up the valley is the long line of stupendous obelisks, and beyond is the ancient tank

or reservoir, from which the inhabitants still get their water supply. Altogether the general aspect of Aksum is most quaint and fascinating. When looking at the obelisks one finds oneself face to face with the relics of a primitive and mysterious cult; when looking at the sacred inclosure we see the existence of one of the most primitive of Christian churches; and the inhabitants, strong in their superstitious veneration for their shrine, are amongst the most bigoted of their race.

Around this interesting centre one enjoys views of surpassing beauty of mountain and of plain. We earnestly longed for a sufficient time to study and enjoy all these things, and the political disturbances of the country permitted us to remain there for ten days, for which we were devoutly thankful.

We first rode up to the house of the political governor of Aksum—the Nebrid Dejetch Weldu Giorghis, to whom I had a letter. He is an elderly man of royal descent, who received us in his commodious hut most graciously. The houses at Aksum are good, being round and about 20 feet in diameter. Ras Alula has another fine house here too, which we visited, and most of them are large, commodious, and circular, with a thatched roof crowned in nearly every case by an ornament which we only saw at Aksum; it is made of pottery, and looks rather like a huge raspberry growing on a stalk out of a plate, with a handle on the top and a cross surmounting it. I have no doubt it has some symbolical and religious meaning, but I could not discover by inquiry what



it was. Off the circle of the governor's hut four angles were formed by walls, in two of which dwell mules, who look round and contemplate all that goes on inside. In the two opposite corners were kept household goods. The floor was carpeted with freshly-cut reeds.

The governor reclined on his couch or *angareb* on one side, like an old Roman patrician, supported by pillows, for he is very old and feeble. On the opposite side stood his sons and grandchildren, whilst we were provided with seats beside the couch. Mead was produced forthwith in a great horn, and dealt out to us in miniature decanters, out of which we had to suck the beverage as best we could, and after our hot ride we found it most refreshing. A widespread misunderstanding had taken place on account of my name. It was reported that the King of England was coming, as no one not royal was likely to be called Theodore. The Abyssinian legend is that King Theodore I., who reigned from 1409-1412, was a great worker of miracles, and that another king would arise of this name, who would re-establish the cross in the Holy Sepulchre, and make Ethiopia the first of nations. This was the reason why Kassai called himself King Theodore II., and so the governor's first question was whether we were related to the royal family of England, and when we replied in the negative he seemed greatly disappointed and to think but little of us. However, he promised everything we asked him—to find us a clean hut in which to dwell, to assist us in our researches, and so forth.

But I think the fact of our plebeian origin must have influenced him, for he certainly kept none of these promises; for beyond exchanging presents, in which he got the best of it, we had very little more to do with him during our stay at Aksum. Perhaps, also, the fact that his son is married to a daughter of Ras Alula may have had something to do with this coolness; he is consequently anti-Italian and anti-Ras-Mangashah, and we were therefore naturally his political opponents.

Words fail me to describe the squalor and dirt of the huts to which the governor sent us as fitting residences. No pig in England would be content with such sties as we were led to. We wished for a house at Aksum in which to dwell; firstly, because for a long residence our tent would not be convenient, requiring as it did constant watching for fear of theft; secondly, no one at Aksum can exist outside the walls which keep off the hyenas, and all the courtyards are too begrimed with dirt to pitch a tent in. The day was fast declining, and still we could find no home; so, in despair, I set off to visit the *etchigeh*, or bishop, to whom I had another letter. He received us in a magnificent hut, sheltered by trees and reeds, in the midst of the sacred inclosure. His grace was clad in a rich black burnouse, with his head enveloped in a white cloth; in his hand he held a cross, which my interpreter told me was gold, but which I believe to have been brass. He is a very grand man indeed, and a mass of affectation in all his movements. When I asked

him about a house he assured me that any number would have been at my disposal within the sacred inclosure had I not brought my wife with me, but, of course, no female is ever allowed within those hallowed walls. However, the bishop was more kind to us than the Nebriid, and ordered me to be conducted to a very good hut near the inclosure, which belonged to a rich old Dejetch, who now dwells at Adoua.

Having been uninhabited for some time, we found our residence fairly clean, and, after brushing it out and scattering peppermint leaves all over the earthen floor, we found ourselves in possession of a really sumptuous and fragrant abode, the only drawback to our happiness being the fact that several poor families dwelt in the same inclosure; but they soon grew tired of staring, and left us in peace. The hut was round, about 20 feet in diameter; horns were stuck in the wall all round, which supplied for us the place of cupboards. My wife was able to put up her dark tent for photography inside, and work in the greatest comfort; and all round we piled our luggage and the innumerable presents of food and bread which were sent us, until, in spite of the peppermint, our abode smelt so strongly of the bread that we had to give it to our muleteers.

The bishop was most kind to us in supplying us with milk, bread, and other delicacies. We explained to him that we could not eat the sour *teff* cakes, so he sent us some round loaves called *ambashah*, which were really quite eatable.

Of course we had to give the bishop a handsome present, and to do so I paid him a second visit. This time he received me in his private sanctum at the back of the larger hut, approached by a pretty garden full of bananas and shady trees. It was one of the most fascinating little rooms I ever saw, approached by a flight of steps. It was only about 8 feet square, with a domed roof, and every inch of it was covered with the quaint Abyssinian paintings. Below was a sort of dado formed by military processions, in which Ras Mangashah and his armies figured largely. Above this were depicted all the apostles enduring all sorts of martyrdoms, whilst the domed ceiling was covered with angels of the quaintest description. A pretty little window, with carved sides, let in just sufficient light to make the effect mysterious, and his grace was seated cross-legged in a corner on a Turkey carpet reading his religious books, many of which were scattered on tall stands about the room, so that there was hardly room for us to get in. He was very gracious to us, and received our gift with infinite politeness. I think nobody is more courteous in his manner than a well-bred Abyssinian, and the Bishop of Aksum is a member of one of the leading families in the land from Gondar in Amhara.

During the absence of a Coptic Abouna the Etchigeh is practically the head of the Abyssinian Church, and, as Abyssinia is naturally a priest-ridden country, his power is very great. By the rules of the Church the poor man may never leave the sacred

inclosure, except some important political juncture requires his presence ; so he and my wife never met, and his photograph never got taken, much to our regret. Crowding round the door into the bishop's garden, we saw a ghastly mass of beggars, a boy with elephantiasis, with a foot and leg nearly as big as the rest of his body ; lepers innumerable, with decaying limbs ; men who had been mutilated for political reasons. All these come to Aksum to get alms from the rich monks, and during our stay there we saw endless sights which made our blood curdle.

Next in authority to the Etchigeh is the Nebrid Tekla Giorghis, or head of the priesthood of Abyssinia. He is married and has a large family ; he lives outside the sacred inclosure, in a good house on the hill-side ; he superintends all the services in the church, looks after all the working clergy, and generally sees to the executive ; he is the guardian of the tables of the law, and all the treasures of the church at Aksum. In former years, when the Etchigeh resided at Gondar, the clerical Nebrid of Aksum was a very powerful person. Now his power is somewhat curtailed. We paid him a visit, and gave him a present of the second-class, namely, a white umbrella and a few silk handkerchiefs ; he regaled us with clotted milk instead of *tedge* ; and his return present of food was conformable to the size of the gift he had received. These are the principal functionaries of the Abyssinian Church : the *Abouna*, sent from Egypt, whose place was just now vacant ; the *Etchigeh*, or head bishop, always a native ; and the *Nebrid*, a sort of archdeacon.

Then there is the *Lij Kaneat*, or judge in ecclesiastical affairs, and the monks and priests of various grades beneath them. Besides these there are at Aksum a large number of the class called *defteras*, whose position it is hard to define; they are lay-assistants in all the services, acting as singers and performers in all the Church ceremonies; they are the scribes, advocates, and doctors of Abyssinia, and are certainly the most instructed and intelligent people we came across. We made great friends with two brothers, both *defteras* at Aksum, who had a nice house close to the sacred inclosure; and to their kindly assistance we owe the fact of being allowed to take impressions of the inscriptions. I am quite sure that neither the Etchigeh nor the Nebrid would have given us the slightest assistance in this direction, for they both belonged to the bigoted party in Abyssinia who resent foreign interference, especially with regard to the secret things of their Church and past history.

The *defteras* do a good business in writing the long parchment charms with quaint pictures thereon, which are tightly bound up in stamped leather cases and tied round the neck to ward off diseases and the evil eye. From a nun at Aksum we bought a very handsome necklace with five scrolls attached, interspersed with circular silver ornaments, and a large square silver box in front, hung with tongueless silver bells, and strongly reminding one of the phylacteries worn by Jews. These scrolls contain several prayers addressed to Christ, the Virgin, and the archangels

Phanuel, Raphael, and Gabriel, rude figures of which are painted at intervals down the scroll with a cross in their hands labelled 'The cross the bane of the Jews'; and the prayer begins thus: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we begin with the help of the Lord exalted and great,



CHURCH AT AKSUM

the book which the Father wrote with his blessed fingers for Christ and the Lady Mary as a guide to the righteous.'

The sacred inclosure at Aksum is one of the most celebrated sanctuaries in Abyssinia, where men guilty of treason, murder, and other crimes can take refuge and be safe from justice. Taking asylum is done by going to the porch, ringing the bell, and declaring three times, in a loud voice, the intention of taking

refuge. Food is brought them by their friends, and thus under religious protection they live secure, and escape the penalties they have incurred. Even Ras Alula himself dares not interfere with the *ghedem*, or sanctuary of Aksum; and we were told that in case of danger we, too, could be protected; but the difficulty was that my wife could never be admitted, and thus the protection for us would be inadequate. Aksum, however, is never attacked and interfered with by rebels; the whole place is too sacred. Here the inhabitants are in possession of cattle and flocks which feed on the neighbouring pastures and none dare to rob them. The Aksumites possess many fine specimens of the Hindoo cattle with the high hump and long dewlap, which feed on the pasturage up the valley, and on their backs sit that persistent little bird with gay plumage and red beak, which eats out all the bad flesh from sores, and, though considerably annoying the animal, they do it, I am told, a great deal of good. The story is told that a Galla chief once purposed to despoil Aksum; but, as he rode into the town, he and his horse disappeared in the ground, and his terrified followers took to flight. The terrible Moslem chief, Gran, did certainly succeed in robbing and destroying the church; but then he was conquered and killed shortly afterwards. Consequently, the people of Aksum enjoy a condition of peace and tranquillity unknown in the rest of Abyssinia.

The big church is a decidedly interesting feature; it was erected under Portuguese influence, after the Gran campaign, on a raised platform, which, un-



doubtedly, has signs of a very ancient substructure. Most probably this was the site of an ancient temple in the days of sun-worship. The few old stones which are in their places show that the structure originally was like that at Yeha, being built of large



SILVER NECKLACE WITH CHARMS CASES

‘drafted stones’ with chiselled edges put together without mortar. The present church is very like a mediæval Portuguese structure, with fragments let into the walls, recalling early Byzantine work, which doubtless formed a portion of the Christian church destroyed by Gran. It has a flat roof and battle-

ments, and a little bell-tower. There is a corridor outside, where the priests dance and sing; and every day during our stay at Aksum we heard them hard at their devotions all through the night, stopping only at break of day.

The steps leading up to the platform, also, would appear to have belonged to an earlier structure. Inside, the church has one large vestibule and the Holy of Holies beyond. In the vestibule is a varied collection of drums, banners, crutches, &c., for the use of the worshippers. The key of the church is certainly the queerest of its kind I have ever seen; it is a curved piece of iron, two feet long, with tooth-like wards at one end. The *deftera* who borrowed it for us could not open the door with it at all, so we had to send for the priest, who was better acquainted with the lock. Around the church are large shady trees, amongst which are several smaller churches or treasure-houses, where the relics and other valuables are kept. Aksum, I was told, is immensely rich in all manner of quaint relics, besides the supposed ark and the tables of the law, but no monetary bribe would gain for me a glimpse at these treasures. Books and sacred things innumerable have, of late years, during the troublous times, poured into Aksum and been stored in the vaults of the church, and everybody who has anything valuable keeps it there as in a bank. When we wanted to buy the nun's necklace, she sent her servant to the church with her key to fetch it, and it and some other treasures were brought in a

strong leather bag for our inspection, after waiting for about half-an-hour.



ILLUMINATED CHARM

Luckily our old friend Alvarez wrote a description of the church at Aquaxumo, as he calls it, before it was destroyed by Gran. He stayed there, he tells us, eight months by the order of Prester John, and considered that he was in the abode of the Queen of Sheba. The Abyssinian legends of the Queen of Sheba and their first King Menelek compare curiously with the early Arabian legends of Bilkis,<sup>1</sup> Queen of the Sabæans, her wealth and her journeys—a legend, like that of Sindbad the Sailor, which one would expect to find amongst a race with widespread commerce. The legend is found in various forms wherever Arabian influence was felt. We have it in Persia, where, when two ruins come near together, one is called the throne of Solomon (*takht i Suliman*), and the other the throne of Bilkis; we have it at Zimbabwe in Mashonaland, where the legend is current that the large elliptical ruin was

the palace of the Queen of Sheba; we have it

<sup>1</sup> Bilkis was the dynastic name of the Queens of Saba.

naturally enough in Arabia itself, where the elliptical ruin at Marib (the ancient Mariaba) is called to this day 'the harem of Bilkis'; and we have it here, too, in Abyssinia, with the adjunct of the son Menelek, whom she is said to have borne to Solomon after her visit to Jerusalem. This seems to me like a clever effort of the early Ethiopian Christians to acknowledge their Arabian descent, and at the same time to identify themselves with the chosen people of God, for the subsequent inscriptions clearly show (Ch. xiii.) that the Abyssinians had nothing to do with Judaism or Christianity till several centuries after Christ.

'In this town,' says Alvarez, 'we found a very noble church; it is very large, and has five naves of a good width and of a great length, vaulted above, and all the vaults are covered up, and the ceiling and sides are all painted; it has also a choir after our fashion. This church has a very large circuit, paved with flag-stones, like gravestones; and it has also a large inclosure, and is surrounded by another large inclosure like the wall of a large town or city; and there are handsome abodes of terraced buildings, and all spout out their water by strong figures of lions and dogs of stone. . . . Twelve stone chairs, as well made of stone as though they were of wood, are for the twelve judges of Prester John.' This account of Alvarez would seem to be very accurate. The spout heads of lions are there still, built into the porch; the twelve stones are there still, but they are ancient triumphal thrones set up by the kings of Aksum after victories, and not the

seats of judges; furthermore, this account of the church, written in 1520, proves that the Abyssinians anciently had a good knowledge of building long before the Portuguese came amongst them.

The inner sacred inclosure is alone denied to the female sex; even a queen is not admitted into this; but within the outer they circulate freely, and here are held the law courts of Aksum, sometimes on a knoll of grass, sometimes in a hut, and many were the angry wrangles that we heard. There is also another church hard by, just the ordinary round Abyssinian church, where women may worship; and outside this is a font where children are baptised, for no unbaptised people are admitted within the walls of a church, and it has an old Ethiopian inscription around it.

For several days after our arrival at Aksum we enjoyed ourselves immensely, taking walks up and down the valley, on to the surrounding hills and plains, and quite forgetting the existence of political disturbances and other dangers. One day we rode quite a distance to visit the lion carved on a rock (p. 195), had our luncheon out, and returned quietly home. Just as we reached Aksum we saw a large body of men assembled. I was forcibly made to ride up to them, and there found the son of Nebrid Dejetch Weldu<sup>1</sup> Giorghis, the one who had married Ras Alula's daughter, seated on a rock, with his hair beautifully plaited, and his followers around him. He smiled at me and bid me adieu, and then we learnt

<sup>1</sup> *Weldu* means son—i.e. Son of (St.) George.

that he was just starting for the mountains by the Mareb to commence a marauding expedition, for he was afraid of being seized by Ras Mangashah if he remained longer at Aksum.

Shortly after our return home the authorities sent to reprimand us for going so far away without an escort, stating that the times were very dangerous and the surrounding hills full of brigands. Our pleasant rambles at Aksum thus came to an end, and we never were allowed to go a quarter of a mile from the town without a body of men to protect us. This condition of affairs was far from agreeable, and we could see that the plot around us was thickening.

Market day at Aksum was, as usual, a busy one. From all the country round the peasants assembled on the flat space below the hill near the sacred inclosure, and held their stalls on and around the ancient stone monuments, of which we shall presently have to speak. Food was here very scarce; no oats for our mules, or vegetables for ourselves, could be procured, and, in fact, the only purchase we made was a specimen of Abyssinian scales, made of leather and string attached to a stick, with notches cut in it as if for rider weights. We were also interested in seeing the curious staves with which the market people walk. They are long sticks with hooks stuck in all the way up; these they stick in the ground, and hang their wares upon them when they have reached their destination.

Bodies of armed troops now began to pour in from all sides. Conflicting reports reached us as to the state of affairs; but, not hearing from the Italian

resident, we determined to continue our work and await events. One day a messenger arrived to us from Ras Mangashah, thanking us for the present we had sent him, and requesting us to come and pay him a visit at his military camp in Tembien, where he promised to treat us with great hospitality. The letter, written in Amharic, interested us much, as it was stamped with the royal Abyssinian seal, the lion in the centre, with the legend around it, 'The lion of the tribe of Judah shall prevail,' and inside this an Arabic legend—a seal which owes its origin to the popular theory that the Ethiopian royal family are descended from King Solomon. Not wishing to be drawn into the war ourselves, we returned him many thanks for his kind invitation, but 'regretted that the lady was too fatigued to undertake so arduous a journey.'

A general from the neighbouring province of Schiré arrived the next day and paid us a visit; in fact, at this juncture, our hut was invaded by generals and officers of the Abyssinian army without end, who, on their way to join their chief, took the opportunity of paying us a visit of inspection. We gave them each a glass of absinthe, and showed them our things, which interested them immensely. The more trivial the object the more delighted they were with it. We happened to have with us one of those French toys, representing a roll of bread which opens in the middle and a mouse jumps out. Nothing we took with us to Abyssinia had a greater run of success than this toy. The generals were all convulsed with laughter







GENERAL MESHASHA STARTING FOR THE WAR

when they saw it, the report spread far and wide, and every one came to our hut to inspect it.

Fitaurari (General) Meshsasha was one of these soldiers on his way to the wars; he was a vain man, and wished to have his photograph taken, and we were delighted to have the opportunity of doing it



GENERAL MESHSASHA WITH HIS SPEAR AND SHIELD BEARERS

quietly. He brought his shield-bearer and his lance-bearer and his horse, splendidly caparisoned, with him. He put on all his grand robes in which he goes to battle, and he wore his lion's mane around his forehead. When mounted on his horse, with his

shield embossed with silver in one hand and his lance in the other, he looked a most formidable warrior. Then he wished to be taken in the garb of peace, with his beautiful embroidered robe or *mergef* around him, and his bearers holding his shield and lance behind him, his hair beautifully plaited and shining with butter. His followers held *shammas* up to form a dressing-room for him whilst he conscientiously changed his trousers, which did not show in the picture. After we had taken him in five different attitudes, he demanded to see the productions, and nothing could exceed his wrath and rudeness when we tried to explain the various processes the photograph would have to go through before completion; but as we had him safe on our negatives we did not much care, except that we rather wanted to buy his shield, which was so prettily decorated with silver lions and curious patterns fastened on to the hide; but, of course, this was now out of the question, as our relations were so strained. However, I managed to get some of the stone bullets, used by the Abyssinians when ammunition is running short, out of one of his followers, and an iron gun-rest which the Abyssinian warriors stick in the ground when they fire, and which also serves to hang the shield on at night. This is probably a legacy of the Portuguese occupation, for such gun-rests were common in Europe about that period. (*Vide* illustration on p. 27.)

The long-dreaded summons from the Italian resident came that night. We must pack up at once,

he said, and be ready to start the following morning for Adoua, so as to avail ourselves of the escort of the Nebrid Tekla Giorghis, who was going to join the forces of Ras Mangashah, and who was expected to be the last of the generals who would go. All the soldiers from Aksum and the neighbourhood had gone, and, as the Italian resident put it, we might, if we liked, stay at Aksum with comparative safety; for, in all probability, no one would interfere with the sanctity of the place; but then we could never hope to get away until the war, which might last for an indefinite period, should come to an end. The mountains around the Mareb were by this time swarming with brigands, and our only hope of an escort and safety was to join the Nebrid. This was the ninth day of our stay at Aksum, and we were enjoying the rest from travel and the constant work of research so exceedingly that it was very irksome to us again to pack up and be on the march. However, there appeared to be no help for it, and we gave the necessary orders.

In the morning I had still to take two more impressions of inscriptions. My wife's negatives were not dry, and the packing was arduous; so it was mid-day before we were ready to mount our mules. All Aksum came out to see us start, cheering and running by the side of our animals. The Nebrid Tekla Giorghis is an admirable specimen of the Abyssinian Church militant; his son went with him, and ten men, each armed with a rifle, formed his staff. He headed our procession as we left Aksum, mounted on his

mule, holding in one hand the white umbrella which we had given him. On his head he wore his white priestly turban, his body was enveloped in a black burnouse, and his bare big toes were stuck into his stirrups. His whole appearance was so quaint that it was hard to realise that he was the chief priest of Aksum going to the wars at the close of the nineteenth century. I looked at him rather as if he were some old picture representing a flight into Egypt, by some pre-Raphaelite artist. Thus protected, before nightfall we reached Adoua once more in safety.

## CHAPTER X

*ON THE ANTIQUITIES OF AKSUM*

THE question of the origin of the Ethiopian is one shrouded in the darkness of ages. Ludolphus, in his history written in 1684, would seem to have almost reached the truth, and the Sabæan inscriptions we have just found in every way substantiate this theory. He says: 'For they are not natives of the land, but came out of that part of Arabia which is called the Happy, which adjoins to the Red Sea.' That an Arabian colony settled on this coast at a very remote period, and had a strong fortified town at Yeha or Ava, is absolutely proved by the mass of Himyaritic inscriptions found there; that these Himyarites were the founders of Aksum is also obvious, for the earlier inscriptions are all in the same script, though later, and not nearly so clearly cut. That this Arabian colony, cut off from its mother country, gradually lost its identity, merging with the negroid races around them, may be taken for granted from the blended physique which is characteristic even of the Ethiopian of to-day, and another interesting point proved by the inscriptions is that the Ethiopians called their country Habashat long before

the later Arabians called it Habesh, a name supposed to be given to it from the mixture of races therein (*vide* Ch. xiii. p. 251).

It is natural that this Arabian colony in Ethiopia should bring with it its ancient cult, its veneration for stone monuments, its sun and its star worship; and this is, as we shall presently see, the key to the curious group of monoliths which are still standing at Aksum. Another factor seems to have been at work after the expeditions of the Ptolemies to the coast of the Red Sea, namely, a Græco-Egyptian influence, which can be traced in the architectural features of these stones, and several other buildings still to be found at Aksum—an influence which probably attacked Ethiopia from two sides, down the Nile valley and from the Greek towns on the west. Greek would seem to have been the fashionable language of the Aksumitans down to the sixth century of our era. King Aizanes, early in the fourth century, set up a stone to commemorate a victory, one side of which is written in Sabæan characters, whilst the other is in late Greek (*vide* p. 240), and there is a certain colour of Greek theology, too, in the fact that he sets up statues and returns thanks ‘to Ares, who is my father,’ for the victories vouchsafed to him over the adjoining tribes.

Early Ethiopian coins have Greek legends around them. The earliest we have is that of a King Aphilas,<sup>1</sup> decorated with a globe on a crescent, the ancient Himyaritic symbol found engraved on stones

<sup>1</sup> Longpérier, *Revue numismatique*, N.S. vol. xiii.

in the British Museum. These Greek legends are found on later coins, after the introduction of Christianity, when the cross is likewise introduced. The early Ethiopian legends do not appear on the coins until the seventh century A.D., and it is highly probable that this knowledge of Greek in the kingdom of Aksum greatly facilitated the introduction of Christianity from Alexandria, paving the way for missionary enterprise on the part of the Egyptian Christians, and this is probably the reason why the Ethiopian Church has always borne a striking resemblance to the form of Christianity in use in the Eastern and Coptic Churches.

From the anonymous author of the 'Periplus of the Red Sea,' A.D. 64, we learn that the king of this country, Zoskales, whose dominions extended from the Moscophagi to Barbaria, was 'a prince superior to most, and educated with a knowledge of Greek,' and several early geographers speak of the importance of this kingdom. 'Auxum and Adulis,' says Nonnosus ('Phot. Bib.,' n. 3, p. 2), 'were the chief centres of trade for gold dust, ivory, leather, hides, and aromatics.' Kosmas, the monk, who copied the Adulitan inscription, tells us about their extensive trade. 'Every two years the King of Aksum sends an expedition to a place he calls Sasou, very rich in gold mines. The traders stop at a certain spot, make a hedge of thorns piled together, and establish themselves there; then they kill their oxen and expose pieces on the thorns, also salt and iron. Then the natives approach, bringing ingots of gold called *tanchara*, and each one



gives gold for the bits of meat, the salt, or iron—one, two, or three ingots.' These voyages lasted about six months, more or less, and forcibly remind one of the expeditions of Solomon and Hiram, and the enterprise of Phœnician traders down this very coast.

The empire of the Aksumites apparently reached its culminating point about this period, and was strong enough to carry its victories over to the mother country on the other side of the Red Sea. Aizanes styles himself King of the Homerites, but it is not until the reign of King Kaleb that we have definite proof of the strength of the Aksumites. Procopius ('*De Bello Persico*,' i. 19) tells us how they, in A.D. 522, crossed the Red Sea, to protect the Christians in Arabia, on planks bound by cords, and anchored at Boulikas, the naval station where the Ethiopian ships generally went. King Kaleb conquered, and, on his return, wrote to the Emperor Justin an account of his victory, and Bishop Gregentius was sent to regulate the Church in Ethiopia. Shortly after this Justinian sent an embassy under Nonnosus to ask for his aid against Persia; but this apparently came to nothing, and shortly afterwards the power of the Aksumites began to wane, and they were finally driven out of Arabia in 575.

Throughout all ages the bitterest enemy of Ethiopia has been its mother country, Arabia. For centuries the Ethiopians have had contests with Mohammedan chiefs, wars of the crescent against the cross as keen and bloodthirsty as those which went on in Europe; but, thanks to its mountains and its inherent

strength, Ethiopia has held its own. Probably this is one reason why Arabian geographers have provided us with such meagre accounts of Abyssinia. In vain we look for information in the pages of Edrisi, Aboulfedâ, and Ibn Saïd; their knowledge was very meagre and their pictures of the country ridiculous. As Gibbon says, 'Encompassed by the enemies of their religion, the Ethiopians slept for a thousand years, forgetful of the world by whom they were forgotten.' The same author also well expresses their origin: 'Their Arab descent is confirmed by the resemblance of language and manners, the report of an ancient emigration, and the narrow interval between the shores of the Red Sea.'

There is another curious reference to Ethiopia given us by Philostorgius. An embassy was sent by Constantine, in A.D. 356, to Arabia and Ethiopia, with Theophilus the Indian at its head. It runs as follows: 'From this Arabia Magna Theophilus proceeded to the Ethiopians, who are called Auxumitæ, who dwell near the entrance of the Red Sea. Next to these Auxumitæ, but to the East, dwell the Syrians, who stretch to the other ocean. For Alexander the Great of Macedon placed them there after he had removed them from Syria.' Without placing much reliance on this story, which we hear of nowhere else, it is worthy of remark that possibly an importation of Syrians into this neighbourhood may have materially influenced the introduction of Greek and Greek architecture into Ethiopia, and there is, as we shall presently see, a curious point of

resemblance between the decoration of the monoliths at Aksum and the decoration on tombs in the south-east of Asia Minor and Syria. This resemblance struck me forcibly when at Aksum before I saw this passage, but still it may only be a coincidence to which no value need be attached.

The first object seen on approaching Aksum is a tall monolith, twenty feet in height, hewn out of granite, pointed and with flat sides. This is about three-quarters of a mile from the town, and there are several others prostrate near it. A hundred yards from this stands the stone with the Greek and Sabæan inscription, erected by King Aizanes, probably early in the fourth century of our era. Fortunately, the Greek is easy to read, and one can make out every word of it, and it acquaints us with several interesting points. *Firstly*, the extent of the kingdom of the Aksumites. King Aizanes styles himself 'King of the Aksumites, and Homerites, and of Raeidan, and of the Ethiopians, and of the Sabæans, and of Zeila,' &c.; from which we may argue that at that time the rule of the Aksumites extended over the mother country and over the whole of Abyssinia. *Secondly*, the name Ethiopia, or, as it is styled in the Sabæan version, Habashat, is given as if somewhat distinct in those days from the Arabian provinces, and would seem to have been of Greek not native origin; gradually it seems to have become the generic name for the race, and is the name by which the Abyssinians to-day distinctly call themselves, varying in no way from the pronunciation which we give it.

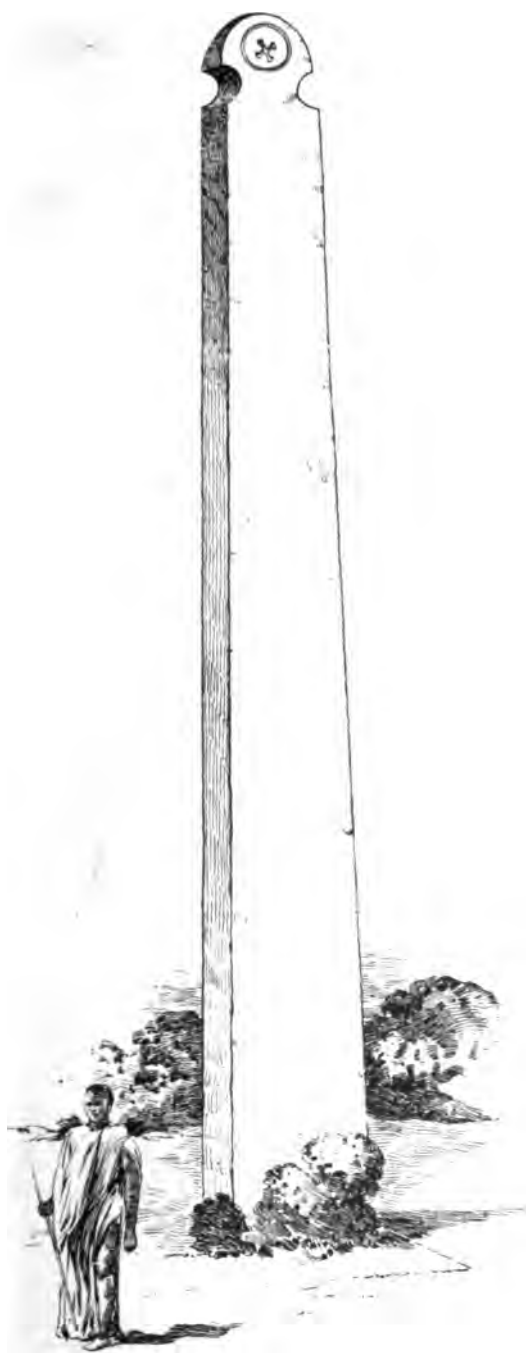
*Thirdly*, the dedication to Mars plainly shows the influence of Greek paganism, and that the legend of the existence of Judaism as the religion of the country prior to the introduction of Christianity is worth nothing, and this is further confirmed by the other inscriptions in which three Sabæan gods are mentioned ; and, lastly, the dedication of 'one statue of gold, one of silver, and three of brass,' enables us to form a very likely conjecture as to certain curious stones, which lead from this inscription in a straight line towards the town, and which evidently were the pedestals of those metal statues which have since been removed. Since writing the above the translations of the early Ethiopian inscriptions by Prof. Müller (vide p. 263) conclusively prove that these were 'the thrones set up in Sada' by the Aksumite kings to commemorate victories ; there are between twenty and thirty of them still to be seen at Aksum.

On one of them are distinctly seen the marks where the feet rested, and the statues have evidently been slipped into grooves which are still seen in the stones. This line of statues of precious metal must have formed a very striking and appropriate approach to the city. Around two of these pedestals have been inscriptions, too much obliterated by the action of the weather to enable more than a few isolated letters of the Sabæan language, gradually approximating itself to the early Ethiopian, to be distinguished, and probably the inscribed tablets were put up near the thrones or statues to which they belonged.

This line of stones and statues leading up to the city bears distinct traces of being of a more recent date than the line of obelisks running up the valley on the other side of the sacred inclosure, and probably dates from the flourishing period of Aksumite history in the fourth and fifth centuries of our era.

It is difficult to say exactly how many of these stone obelisks there are left standing at Aksum. Including those at a little distance off on the plain, those at the entrance of the town, and those running up the valley, I should say there are somewhere about fifty. Many of the fallen ones are hidden away in gardens, built into houses, and so forth. Systematically to count them would take a long time and an arduous search; but I had hoped to have accomplished this had not our departure from Aksum been so precipitate. The great row of obelisks up the valley calls, however, for our more special attention, the others being merely rough unhewn stones, like the menhirs of Brittany, the monoliths of Zimbabwe in Mashonaland, and the Stonehenge of Wiltshire.

The great point of interest about the obelisks of Aksum is that they form a consecutive series, from these very rude unhewn stones up to the highly-finished and decorated obelisks, and it is highly probable that here we have the origin and development of the obelisk, side by side; high up in the valley they are all rough and unhewn, like the monoliths at Ava, placed in the ground at all angles, and in no way to be distinguished from the many rude



BACK VIEW OF THE DECORATED MONOLITH, AKSUM

stone monoliths which we find scattered all over the world. Then we come to one sixteen feet in height, which has the corners squared and a series of nine or ten notches running up one side of it, and various other holes cut on its surface. This appears to be the earliest attempt at bringing these monoliths under the influence of decorative art.

Next we have one about the same height, which is divided into stories by four bands, and the beam ends, supposed to support the stories, distinctly cut on the stone. Without the assistance of the more perfect monoliths, one would not have arrived at the meaning of this decoration ; but by comparison I think it is quite obvious that the division into stories is here intended to be conveyed. The highly-finished monoliths are nearly all of the same character, namely, representations of a many-storied castle. At the base are the altars, fitting beautifully on to the monoliths, which we will presently describe. Then there is the sham door cut in the granite block, in one case with a lock and bolt, in another with a simple door-handle ; above this we are left to imagine a lofty hall with a low story above it like an *entresol*. Between each of the stories and along the sides the beam ends are carefully cut, causing one to imagine that the original pattern of these monoliths was constructed of wood. In the case of the one standing monolith of this description there are nine stories, topped with a semi-circular finish, on the front of which has been fastened a metal plaque, and behind there is still to be seen a representation of the solar



**RUEST MONOLITHS, AKSUM**







**MONOLITH WITH BANDS**





**TALL STANDING MONOLITH, AKSUM**



disc. In fact, we have before us a perfect representation of the Beth-el, or House of God, terminating in the firmament, in which the Sabæan sun-god is supposed to reside.

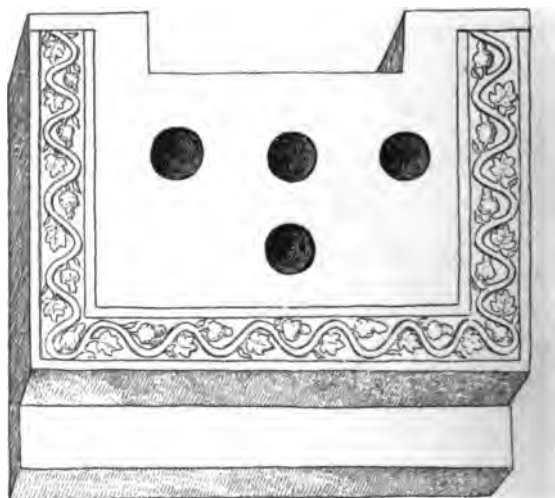
The religious purport of these monoliths is obvious ; at the foot of most of them stand the altars—very interesting examples of religious architecture. One of these, 7 ft. 10 in. by 9 ft. in width, has



ALTAR AT BASE OF A MONOLITH, AKSUM

a raised platform, in which is cut a vessel, strangely resembling a Greek kylix, to receive the blood of the slaughtered victim. Two channels cut at two corners enabled the blood to flow on to the lower platform, where again we have three more recipient vessels cut, and a complete series of holes all round, and two more channels at the corners to enable the blood to flow on to the ground.

Such altars as these were common in Mithraic worship, when victims were sacrificed to the great sun-god. We have them, too, in Greece, and their purport is clear. The altar before the great standing monolith is flat, 11 ft. 5 in. by 13 ft. 10 in. in width. It has around it a pattern formed of vine tendrils, with alternate leaves and bunches of grapes, a pattern also seen on a Himyaritic stone in the



ALTAR AT BASE OF TALL DECORATED MONOLITH, AKSUM

British Museum. In the centre of this altar are three deep holes, 1 ft.  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in., for the reception of the blood. Undoubtedly excavation would reveal other altars, but for all practical purposes the two before us are sufficient to explain the object of them all. The obelisk next to the large standing one has a perfectly flat undecorated altar. This obelisk is rounded at the top, like the obelisks at Medun in Egypt, and the obelisk on the other side is pointed

like Cleopatra's needle ; but these are entirely without decoration to guide us. The great standing obelisk is 60 ft. in height, but it was by no means the largest. In an adjoining garden we saw the remains of a much larger one broken into huge fragments, the extreme front width of which is 12 ft. 8½ in., as against 8 ft. 7 in., which is the greatest width of the standing one. Consequently, this and another,



SHAM DOOR OF FALLEN MONOLITH, AKSUM

which has fallen and now lies in Ras Alula's garden, must have considerably towered above the one which, as it stands now, imposes one with its height and delicate proportions. These two were similarly divided into stories, and, in falling, they must have crushed their altars to fragments beneath their weight. I may mention here that the curious connection between these and tombs in Cilicia

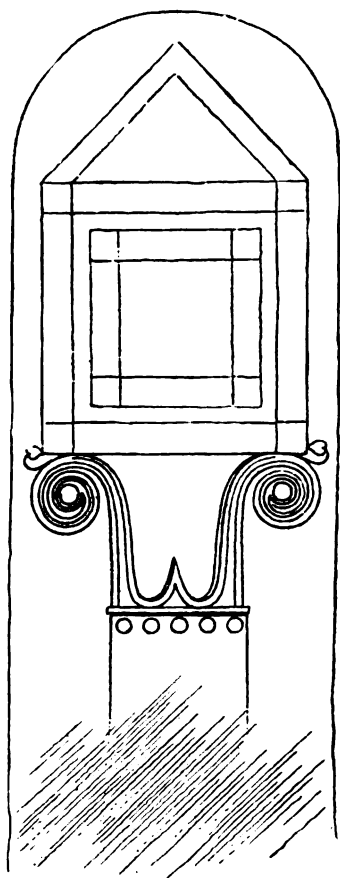


and Lycia is suggested by the imitation beam ends and the sham windows. The tombs in Asia Minor are made to represent houses, with beams for their roofs carefully cut in stone, and most of them

have imitation windows.

It is also curious that the church at Asmara has beams inserted all along between the stones for support. (*Vide* p. 38.)

Another obelisk is of particular interest. Unfortunately, it has fallen on its face; but, by crawling underneath and scraping away some soil, I was able to recover most of the pattern. This obelisk was only 27 ft. 10 in. in height, and 6 ft. 6 in. in width, and had on the back a decoration like a Greek tomb, or temple *in antis*, the columns of which were 5 ft. 8 in. in height. On the front side this same decoration appeared at the top, but it was supported



FRONT OF FALLEN MONOLITH, AKSUM

by a column made in the form of a lotus or an Ionic scroll, resting on the inevitable beams, with the small ivy-leaf at the top, so commonly found on late Greek

sepulchral stelæ. It is impossible to tell what was below this, and if proper appliances had been forthcoming I should have turned this obelisk over again. This obelisk, more than any other, shows the Græco-Egyptian influence, and that that influ-



TOP OF FALLEN MONOLITH, AKSUM

ence was not at a very early date, probably considerably later than the settlement of the colony at Adulis.

One obelisk, which had broken into fragments and fallen into the stream, enabled us to take a photograph of the top and to see the holes by which the metal plaque had been attached, and thereby satisfactorily establish that it was not a cross which had been placed here, as ardent Jesuit travellers had stated. For assigning an actual period for the con-

struction of these decorated monoliths we have but slender data to go upon. Personally I feel assured that they belong to that period which saw the development of colossal architecture at Baalbec, and that the Aksumites then adapted the fashion in art to their special form of cult, namely, a veneration for stones set up in honour of the celestial deity, and the patterns for this decoration found their way hither from Egypt and Asia Minor. Apparently, at the time Alvarez visited Aksum there was only one decorated monolith standing. He writes: 'This raised stone is 64 ells in length and 6 wide; it is very straight and well worked, made with arcades below as far as a head made like a half-moon, and the side which has this half-moon is towards the south.' As far as I could ascertain there was no special system of alignment used in erecting these monoliths. Nevertheless, the altar and the decorated side is always towards the rising sun.

As to when and how the great monoliths fell there is no record or legend to help us. I imagine that the washing away of the soil by the stream, the Mai Shum, has been the reason, causing them to lose their balance and fall forward. The effect of these colossal slabs of granite, when they were all standing, must have been very imposing, and Aksum in its best days must have perfectly bristled with these stone monuments of a primitive form of piety. The erection of stone monuments seems to have been inherent in the Semitic races. The Phœnicians had their *bætylia*; the Canaanites, Moabites, and other

racés of a kindred origin always set up stones as objects of piety. In Leviticus xxvi. 1 we have the injunction to the Israelites to set up no image of stone in their land, the words used being *eben mascith*, a figured stone or stone of picture. Joshua set up twelve stones to commemorate his passage of



FRAGMENT OF THE LARGEST MONOLITH AT AKSUM

the Jordan. The statues of Baal were supposed to be of stone of a conical shape; and here at Aksum we seem to have before us a highly perfected form of stone worship, associated with sacrifices to the sun, and affording us a complete series, from the early rude monument to the exquisitely decorated monolith, leading up in architectural symbolism to the home of the great God above.

Within the precincts of the sacred inclosure

there are several objects of antiquity scattered about which were probably coexistent with the monoliths. At the porch are two carved lion heads which have formerly been waterspouts, and are now set into the



ANCIENT SPOUT, AKSUM

wall for decoration. They obviously belong to a period when art was of the best at Aksum, and show a distinct Greek influence. Within the outer ring of the sacred inclosure there

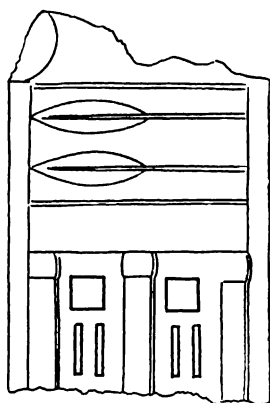
are twelve gigantic blocks of stone placed in a row, which must originally have been the pedestals of metal statues similar to those already alluded to at the outskirts of the town. One of them has a very much defaced Ethiopian inscription on it.

Before the porch leading into the inner inclosure are some columns with a stone slab in the midst, which is popularly supposed to be the throne on which the emperors of Abyssinia are crowned. Curiously enough, these columns are exactly of the same style of architecture as the columns at Adulis and Koloe, which we shall have occasion to describe later on; they are square, and with a narrow edge cut off the four angles of the shaft. This again shows the influence of the coast towns on the architecture of the interior. In the courtyard before the church there are numerous ancient stones laid down in the pavement; one of these is a fragment of a big monolith; we can see the windows on it, and above are carved two lance heads, a form of decoration which does not occur on any of the other obelisks.

The foundations of the church are built of huge blocks of stone, evidently belonging to an ancient temple which stood on the same site, probably a Himyaritic temple to the sun-god, towards which the lines of stone monoliths lead from different directions, and these stones are all drafted like those at Yeha.

There are mounds and rubbish heaps scattered about in the sacred inclosure, in which we longed to dig; but, unfortunately, the superstition of the Abyssinians connected with this their sacred shrine will probably not allow of any work being done here for many years to come.

Up the valley there are many points of interest to be examined. Firstly, the great tank or reservoir, where the waters of the stream are artificially confined, and where still the inhabitants of Aksum get their supply. This is also an ancient construction, and on the hillside is approached by rock-cut steps, resembling those one finds everywhere at the site of old Greek towns. There are several sets of these rock-cut steps and rock-cut paths leading up from the valley to the hill above. Further up the valley, beyond the line of monoliths, are the foundations of several ancient buildings, huge blocks of stones carefully cut and placed together without mortar, making



FRAGMENT OF MONOLITH,  
AKSUM

one feel as if one were visiting the site of some ancient Greek city.

On an eminence about a mile and a half up the valley is a collection of ancient tombs, called by the inhabitants the tombs of Kaleb, the king who according to the Abyssinian story in the sixth century of our era carried his victorious arms into Arabia; but they bear evidence of being much older than that period. The blocks of stones of which they are constructed are very large, and you enter by a sloping *dromos*, or approach, just as you enter into ancient Greek tombs. There are three sepulchral chambers built with a regularity which, if found in Greece, would at once make one assign them to a good period. An adjoining tomb has a stone sarcophagus in one of its chambers, and in the rocks around are cut several tombs, the exact counterpart of those one sees in Asia Minor and Syria. Taking all these points together, the decorations on the monoliths and altars, the rock-cut steps and tombs, the construction of the so-called tomb of Kaleb, the foundations still left of the more ancient buildings, and finally the Greek inscription, I think we cannot lay too great a stress on the obvious Greek influence which has been brought to bear on the architecture of the ancient capital of the Aksumites. Furthermore, it is not a Greek influence of a debased period, and must have come from intercourse between the Sabæans and the Greeks before the commencement of our era.

A walk along the edge of the hill to the north of

the present town impresses one with the extent and size of the ancient town of Aksum. Here there are for miles traces of buildings with large stone foundations at the edge of the plain, structures of considerable size, which must have been temples or palaces. Beyond these we found another field of monoliths, all undecorated and unhewn; and then there is a large circular artificial mound which prob-



OUTLINE OF LIONESS CARVED ON ROCK

ably contains a tomb, and which we longed, but, owing to the stress of circumstances, were unable, to open.

One day we visited the lioness carved on a granite boulder, called Mount Gobederah, about three miles to the north-west of Aksum. It is half-way up the steep hill, at the foot of a massive granite projection, from which I imagine the ancients obtained their large blocks of granite for their monoliths, for the



granite is noticeably split up into flakes, which in themselves suggest the form of the monolith. The lioness is in very low relief, and to obtain a photograph of it we burnt sticks and run over the lines with black, otherwise it would never have come out. It is a very spirited work of art, measuring 10 ft. 8 in. from the nose to the tail. The running attitude is admirably given, and the sweep of the hind legs shows that the artist had thorough command of his subject. A few inches from the nose of the lioness is a circular disc with rays, probably intended to represent the sun, and the whole thing impresses one strongly with the knowledge and skill possessed by the artist in depicting animal life.

Probably, if the political conditions of the country had permitted us to remain longer at Aksum, we should have been able to discover more traces of this interesting civilisation in the heart of Africa. About two hours from Aksum, on a hill, we were told of other remains called 'The House of Solomon.' To avoid another of the too frequent disappointments we experienced from the ignorance of the inhabitants, who led us to all manner of stones which they supposed to be inscribed, I sent my interpreter, on whose judgment I could rely, to inspect the place. He reported the existence of walls of big stone, and a lion head similar to those at the porch of the sacred inclosure, but no inscriptions. Owing to our hurried departure I was unable to go myself, but the report is sufficient to show that in the immediate neighbourhood of Aksum there are doubtless many

other sites which would repay an archæological search. In the actual town itself I think we examined everything that it was possible to do without conducting extensive excavations, and in the present condition of Abyssinian superstition and political anarchy there does not seem much chance of getting any work done in that line.

## CHAPTER XI

*ON THE RETURN JOURNEY*

ON reaching Adoua we found the state of affairs highly critical, and the Italian resident very anxious. The governor of Adoua had been excessively rude to him, and refused to grant him the escort necessary for returning to the Italian territory. 'They will never let the doctor go' was the opinion of every one. 'You will all be obliged to go and join Ras Mangashah in Tembien,' and the facts of the case were too evident. Ras Mangashah wanted the presence of the Italian and ourselves at his camp, and we had grave forebodings that we might be yet detained in Abyssinia for an indefinite period, and obliged to go to the wars, whether we wished it or no. Captain Dr. de Martino lost no time in despatching a message to Addi Quala to inform Tenente Mulazzani of our predicament. Of course it was impossible to resume our journey on the following day; with no escort forthcoming it would be little short of madness to attempt to cross the mountains in the direction of Mareb; and with conflicting rumours around us, and uncertainty of every kind as to what was going to happen to us, we passed a very unpleasant day at Adoua.

That evening the Italian resident gave out his determination to fly at any cost on the morrow, and risk the dangers of the road, in the hopes of meeting succour from the Italian side of the Mareb. Every moment increased the danger of our being seized by the governor and carried off to Tembien to join the camp of Ras Mangashah. All the other Europeans at Adoua, consisting of the three Greeks, were to accompany us, and also Mr. Schimper, secretary to the Italian resident, a son of Herr Schimper, the German botanist, by an Abyssinian lady. He had married a daughter of Fitaaurari John's, whose father was a European, and therefore their tiny baby of a few months old could boast of as mixed a parentage as any one.

We were prepared to start soon after sunrise, but had to unload our mules again, as the Abyssinians would not let the Italian resident go, and we could not go without him. We were told that Ras Mangashah had not given permission for us to depart. At last, every one but our small escort was turned out of the yard, and we thought it better to make an unexpected start before resistance became too strong. So, at ten o'clock, after a messenger had been received from Lieutenant Mulazzani that he was coming to meet us, we started, our party consisting of the resident, the family of Schimper, with baby Schimper in a leather bag across its nurse's back, and about ten Abyssinian soldiers, who were positively bribed to go with us and protect us. All went well for about an hour and a half, when our ten

protectors sat down and refused to go one step further. We were just about entering the Gashiwarkeh pass, which was exceedingly dangerous, they said, and full of brigands; and in blank dismay we had to dismount, and at twelve o'clock in the day prepare to encamp at one of the most perilous spots on the road. The Italian was furious, and suspicious of a plot, but there was nothing else to be done under the circumstances; so, with great reluctance, we chose a spot for our tents, and let loose our mules. Scarcely had we done so when a messenger arrived from Mulazzani, informing us that he was only about an hour and a half away, and was coming on to our assistance as fast as he could. Without hesitation we ordered our mules to be reloaded and set off, and an exceedingly joyful meeting we had, after a ride of about half an hour.

Mulazzani had brought with him all the available forces at his command, native troops in all manner of strange garb, numbering 400, who were serving under the flag of Italy, and no words can express how grateful we were to see them, knowing that now our dangers were over, and that a safe exit from Abyssinia was assured to us. We thought that Captain de Martino would die of the ecstatic joy he experienced on this occasion. He and Mulazzani jumped off their mules and flew into one another's arms, and indulged in a long and tender embrace, after the manner of their country. We looked on at this scene, showing as much joy and gratitude as our colder northern blood would permit. There was to

be no delay, our rescuers said ; so we hurried on for many long hours, until we were nearly at the Mareb ; for the Italians, in thus crossing the frontier to effect our rescue, were anxious to avoid any collision with Abyssinian troops. We halted by a stream as night drew on, and a weird scene our camp presented, with its quaint groups of Abyssinian warriors seated round the fires, playing their native instruments, and evincing the greatest satisfaction at having accomplished their end without unpleasant complications. They had been on the march since 3 A.M. the previous morning, yet they kept up a lively conversation all night, and we were off in the morning at four. Abyssinians certainly seem as if they never can get tired. We reached the Mareb for our mid-day halt, and during the afternoon, in great and scorching heat, rode up as far as Gundet, where we once more pitched our tents for the night.

Here, however, though safe from our Abyssinian enemies, another and unexpected terror awaited us. Scarcely had we got to bed before a most terrible thunderstorm broke over us—or rather two thunderstorms, which discharged themselves one after the other quite close to us—thunderstorms such as those who were acquainted with the country said they had never seen the like. For three hours we had one perpetual flash of lightning and one endless clap of thunder. Then came the rain in torrents, flooding our tents, and dashing to the ground that of the two Italian officers. I never was in such a storm, and hope never to be in such another. An Abyssinian

thunderstorm of the first order quite comes up to one's preconceived ideas of the end of the world, minus the final catastrophe. Such a thunderstorm at this period of the year is most exceptional, I was told, and it ushered in the period of the 'lesser rains' before they were expected, and this year the lesser rains were of unusual violence, and coming as they did, before the farmers had ploughed their fields and sown their grain, they were of not much good. Such is the nature of agriculture in Abyssinia, even more uncertain than it is in our own much-abused climate.

We rode on to Addi Quala next day, up the steep ascent from the Mareb valley, at the top of which the women met us, coming in crowds with joy and thankfulness to welcome their husbands back. They treated us to their gurgling greeting with more than usual vehemence; they danced, they sang, and ran along by our side, evincing their joy in every movement, and continued to do so for at least two hours after our arrival. We felt decidedly shattered on reaching Addi Quala, and gladly accepted Lieutenant Mulazzani's invitation to rest for three days, and recover ourselves from the effects of our somewhat exciting exit from the realms of Prester John.

Personally, I cannot help thinking that the sooner some European nation undertakes the government of Abyssinia, the better it will be for the country. Torn asunder as they are by the quarrels of their leaders, raided as they are by marauding parties of their fellow-countrymen, the poor Abyssinian peasants have not a chance of improving their condition. Every

generation adds to the tract of once-cultivated country which is becoming desert; every generation sees villages and churches abandoned, and no others taking their place. If this condition of affairs continues very much longer, the Ethiopian will be, like his elephant, a thing of the past.

From the fortress of Addi Ougri we determined, as we had now ample time at our disposal, to return to the coast by quite a different route, and visit certain ruins about which we heard rumours in the neighbourhood of Halai. Godofelassi was the first place which we came to on our way, once the chief town of a province and a place of considerable importance; but, now that the Italians have left it and gone to Addi Ougri, it has an air of great squalor and misery. The church is old and interesting, having a very thick sacred grove around it, and some very good pictures round the Holy of Holies. Here we saw illustrations for the first time out of the life of the great Abyssinian saint, Tekla Haimanout. In one of these he is represented as standing for seven years with one foot in a river, reading his Bible. All sorts of strange stories such as these, which could only have been invented by the fertile and credulous brain of an Abyssinian, are told about St. Tekla Haimanout in their sacred books. His tomb is at the monastery of Debra Libanos, where pilgrims go in crowds, and near it is the stream which is reported to have come out of the ground to appease the saint's thirst, and originally, like all these sacred streams, to have come by mysterious channels from the Jordan.



He has the credit of having established the Abyssinian Church on its present basis, and to have insisted on the numerous fasts and austerities of monastic life which are still observed. He girded his loins with heavy chains, and he lived on herbs up in the mountains, where he wrote his rules and precepts for the guidance of his followers.

Some of the houses at Godofelassi are large, being built on the square system, which seems to have been preferred to the round hut in all the Abyssinian district north of the Mareb. We sat under the shade of a tree to eat our lunch, and were soon surrounded by the inhabitants. Three women, with their hair down, or rather sticking out like the snakes of Medusa, amused us greatly. They wear it in this way on the rare occasions on which they wash it until it is ready to be greased and plaited in rows according to the custom of their country. One of these wild-looking women had a baby on her back in its leather cradle edged with cowrie beads, and tied by a belt around the waist; and here we acquired one of those infantile necklaces of silver worn by all Abyssinian children of the better class until they reach the age of puberty (*Vide* Illustration, p. 21). They are exceedingly light and thin, and made me wonder if they were intended to represent what the old Roman *bullæ*, used for the same purpose,<sup>1</sup> is supposed to have done, namely, a bubble floating upon water. There are generally nine of them tied on to the Christian cord, and the effect is exceedingly odd.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* the *hæres bullatus* of Juvenal (Sat. xiv. 4).

There is so much that has a Roman pedigree in Abyssinia, it is quite possible that it is the origin of it.

One of the disappointments of our life in Abyssinia consisted in not being able to get good honey or good milk, both of which we were led to believe, before going there, flowed in the land. The milk, unless we had it straightway drawn into one of our own vessels, was nearly always spoilt by being put into a dirty pot, and the honey was always in a state of fermentation—a revolting mass of bees' heads and wings, ready to be made into mead. At Godofelassi they brought us honey stuffed into a pot with a lid of clay fastened on with cowdung, and when we opened it the mass of foreign matter with which the honey was filled was so great that we gave it all away in disgust to our men; and when we recollected the comparative cleanliness of the savages we came across the year before in Mashonaland, we arrived at the conclusion that the Abyssinians must be quite the dirtiest people in the world.

Soon after leaving Godofelassi we began to descend rapidly into the valley of the Mareb once more, and after a hot and uninteresting ride we came to a halt at a miserable little village called Shia, at the edge of a precipitous descent into the river bed. At Shia there are now only some wretched hovels, but they are perfectly overgrown with tomatoes, small round ones about the size of pigeons' eggs, which we ate like gooseberries, and enjoyed immensely after having been so long without fruit and vegetables. About two hundred yards from the present village is

a big sycamore with huge granite boulders under it, and holes for the everlasting game cut therein, and beyond are the traces of a ruined village. I believe at one time Shia was rather an important place, commanding as it does one of the passes of the Mareb by which traders formerly entered the country. Next day, after a steep descent into the Mareb valley, we ascended rapidly by an atrocious road, up which we had to do a great deal of walking, and then entered the district of Gura, a series of shallow valleys amongst the mountains, full of a rich red soil, where the Italian School of Agriculture has made very extensive experiments in cultivation with greater success than in any other portion of their Abyssinian colony. We pitched our tents close to the Italian settlement, and discussed agricultural prospects for the year with Italian labourers. We had another very heavy thunderstorm that evening; but, being prepared for it, we suffered little, and the following morning on the low ground by the stream we gathered a large crop of mushrooms, which formed a valuable addition to our larder.

There are a great number of villages about here, all more or less flourishing. This district or province of Okule Kusai, which was once practically independent of Abyssinia, and ruled over by the Bahr-negous, or King of the Sea, has many characteristics which are not to be found elsewhere in Abyssinia. The men are of a much stronger type, tall, active, and independent; they are very industrious, and till their land with great care. Formerly this district enjoyed

a constitution of its own, and elected its own national assembly, which in its turn elected the Bahr-negous, generally out of one family. The men were not obliged to serve in the Abyssinian army, nor did they pay any taxes, and, inasmuch as all the caravan roads passed through this district and paid a tribute to the Bahr-negous, the condition of this district was exceedingly flourishing. The Italians told me that their best soldiers and workmen in all their colony came from this district, and certainly in physique the inhabitants of this district are far superior to any we had seen.

We halted for our midday repast at the village of Maraba, where we found several quite imposing-looking houses, square, and with towers on the top of the flat roofs. The headman of the village, Kantiba Asboroum, invited us to refresh ourselves in his house. Kantiba is a title peculiar to this district, and appears to correspond to the Degetch or Shoum, the titles of governors of towns and villages in Abyssinia. He was a very fine specimen of a patriarch, and exceedingly hospitable. A *shamma* was hung up to screen us from the vulgar gaze as we ate, excellent *tedge* was produced, and baskets of *teff* and a really capital dish, which the Abyssinians indulge in in Lent, called *elbèt*, a sort of soubise sauce made of oil and onions, into which you dip the bread before eating it. Kantiba Asboroum had some excellent furniture, a handsomely carved bed or *angareb* and stools, and above all a chair, which no sooner did we see than we coveted. The seat is low, like the old

Egyptian chairs, and made with thongs of skin fastened to the woodwork, which is joined together exactly on the old Egyptian principle. Two panels let into the back of the chair are prettily carved, and no sooner did we express a wish to acquire this



ABYSSINIAN CHAIR

article than the Kantiba presented it to us, and thus we made this rather formidable addition to our already weighty baggage. That evening we halted at Saganeiti, and sent the Kantiba of Maraba a return present of a white umbrella, with which, I believe, he was highly delighted.

Almost all the inhabitants of the large village of Saganeiti are Roman Catholics. A mission has been established for many years in Okule Kusai, with the result that a large number of the inhabitants have abandoned their old Abyssinian form of Christianity and joined the Church of Rome. Under the Italian influence a new church has been built here, on the top of a high mound, looking for all the world like a church in the Apennines. Still, however, the inhabitants have not abandoned their old customs. On the night of our arrival, one of the headmen in a hut close to our abode died, and his relations indulged in their passionate grief and wails during the whole of the night, and held their *teskar*, or funeral feast—a sort of sacrifice to the departed—a custom which one finds nearly everywhere in the East, as old as the very oldest pages of history, and perhaps more tenacious than any other.

Saganeiti is very high, and comes in for its share of the sea mists which roll up here by way of the gorge of Taranta from the low lands. The next day we spent there almost entirely in the mist, a sort of thin drizzling rain, strongly reminding us of Scotland. It was a great feast day in the Italian colony, being the birthday of the King of Italy. There was a mass held in the church, at which Ethiopian priests of the Roman Catholic persuasion officiated. The service is conducted in Latin, as in Italy, but a slight Ethiopian innovation is admitted in the shape of a little dancing, without which no Abyssinian would be content. The priests looked odd with Roman Catholic

vestments, white turbaned heads, and bare black legs. The headmen of the village, two brothers of the rank of Kantiba, manifested great loyalty, and came to the house of the Italian resident to drink the health of their king in decidedly potent libations.

The next morning was beautifully fine again, and we started early for Digsa, which is only distant about two hours from Saganeiti, where we proposed to halt for a night in our tents. We passed through exceedingly rich land, with an enormous number of quolquol and juniper trees. Here the quolquols have very large stems, and are universally used in building and roofing the long low houses. About an hour after leaving Saganeiti we came across an exceedingly interesting old sycamore, a sacred tree invaded by junipers and wild olives which surrounded it in one vast jungle. Around it a wall has been built, and its lower branches are hung with little offerings—beads, rags, bracelets, rings, &c. It is dedicated to our friend St. Tekla Haimanout, and the earth around it is considered very good for curing all manner of diseases. The patients who arrive here strip themselves naked and sit under the tree whilst a friend scrapes together the earth in a pottery jar provided for the purpose, and sprinkles it over the body of the sick, just as at Addi Ras (p. 63) we saw the patients bathed with the water of the sacred stream. Once a year, on the last Sunday in December, the day of St. Tekla Haimanout, pilgrims come here in crowds, kill a sheep or an ox, and hold an open-air feast in honour of the saint. We were

greatly pleased with this sacred tree, and felt that we were in the presence of the survival of a very ancient form of worship.

Digsa was once a very important place, and prior to the Italian occupation the 'king of the sea' had his capital here; it is situated on the top of a conical hill, which commands numerous valleys in all directions. The houses look old, and are nearly all constructed in the style common to this part of the country; but we were disappointed in finding no traces here whatsoever of any remote antiquity. Since the Italian occupation, Digsa has very much deteriorated; it is off the main road now, and as a centre Saganeiti is much more important. From the summit of the hill we enjoyed a charming view over the distant mountains of Adigrat, and we saw once more our old friends the mountains of Adoua, and the deep valley of the Mareb dividing up the country in its course.

Not far from our tent, nestling behind a secluded rock, I found an Abyssinian blacksmith forging iron. Curiously enough, he does it in precisely the same way that the blacksmiths in Mashonaland forge their iron. He has two skin bellows, one of which he holds and inflates with each hand by pulling them backwards and forwards. The nozzle of these bellows is inserted into clay blow-pipes, which introduce the wind into the burning charcoal which smelts the iron. It is curious how widespread this method of smelting is through savage Africa. The paraphernalia of an Abyssinian smith is precisely identical with



that of the tribes to the south of the Zambesi, hundreds of miles away ; but the Mashonaland nigger produces a better article than the Ethiopian smith. The blacksmith in Abyssinia is looked upon with mingled dread and superstition ; that was the reason, I imagine, that our smith had chosen a retired corner at some distance from the village for his work. He is supposed to have the power of communicating the *bouda* or devil to anyone he wishes ; he is supposed to have the power of turning himself into a hyena and committing ravages on his enemies. The story of the *loup-garou* and the were-wolf is as widely spread amongst the Abyssinians as it is amongst other superstitious and primitive races of mankind.

As Digsä was one of the last Abyssinian villages of importance which we should visit, we took care here to annex an Abyssinian umbrella and a *malakat* or trumpet, both of them exceedingly cumbersome additions to our luggage. As to the latter, we found considerable difficulty in possessing ourselves of it : the man professed to be more attached to his trumpet than to his wife and family, and scorned the silver dollars with which I hoped to tempt him. Much to our annoyance, and I suppose with the intention of getting a bigger figure, he came and played it that evening near our tent. Next morning we rode away without it, but he followed us ; and when he saw there was no hope of a higher price he consented to part with it, and the coveted trumpet was ours. Nevertheless, he followed us next day to our halting place, Halai, and demanded it back again, saying he

felt miserable without it ; but we held him to his bargain, and refused to open negotiations afresh.

Halai is one of the highest places in the Italian colony, being 600 feet higher than Asmara, and enjoying a perfectly delicious climate. It has been quite recently chosen by the Italians as a military station, and the officers had only been there three months when we arrived. There has been for ages an old village there, squalid and poor ; but, being the first Abyssinian village visited by travellers after ascending to the high plateau, it has come in for a larger share of notoriety than it deserves. Halai has been the centre of the Roman Catholic mission in the district of Okule Kusai for many years, and has been the scene of bitter contests between the old form of Christianity and the new. They quarrel chiefly about the Church : is it to be Ethiopian or Roman Catholic ? One day the majority are of one persuasion and the next day the majority are of the other, and the service of the Church is conducted accordingly. The government were seriously just then taking into consideration the advisability of pulling down this church or converting it into a powder magazine, and obliging the contending parties to find their own places of worship.

The Roman Catholic fathers do not speak in very enthusiastic terms of the constancy of their converts, for they will change their religious views, they told me, out of personal spite, for a mule—nay, even for a sack of flour—and then change back again with equal rapidity when the object is gained.

At Halai we made inquiries about our ruins, and spent a day there resting and questioning the inhabitants. We learnt that the object of our search was five to six hours distant, and as that part of the country was rather disturbed, the Italian Captain Odone, in command at Halai, allotted us a considerable and well-armed escort.

We enjoyed our day at Halai extremely. The Italians have got a garden and some excellent vegetables, including beetroot growing to a size I had never seen before. Below this garden was a lovely spring of bright, clear water, shaded by thick trees and rocks, where the inhabitants assemble to fill their skin receptacles, evening and morning, in picturesque groups. But the sight of Halai is the wonderful gorge known as the Mai Kashi, or priest's water, which runs like a wedge into the high plateau; and from Halai you look deep, deep down into its mysterious depths, and as it opens out into a lower plateau you find your horizon bordered by the blue misty mountains of Adigrat and Adoua. As a lovely foreground to this enchanting view are massive boulder rocks with gnarled juniper trees and the fiery spikes of the aloe growing out of them.

## CHAPTER XII

*THE RUINED CITIES NEAR THE COAST*

THE high plateau of Kohaito was the name of the place on which we were to find our ruins—a long, isolated plateau, as high as Halai, but cut off from the rest of the Abyssinian high plateau by deep valleys, and with its wall of precipitous rocks around it the position, from a strategical point of view, is splendid.

Very soon after leaving Halai we entered on a district of sandstone hills, eaten away into strange forms by the action of the atmosphere. Here dwell, in uninterrupted peace, hundreds—nay, rather thousands—of baboons, whose bark at our approach echoed through the still valleys; and as far as the eye could reach we saw nothing but dense masses of baboons scampering to their safe retreats as we approached. Baboon mothers with their babies on their backs, baboon fathers with their venerable frills of long hair and dog-like bark—all fled before us, and formed a dense mass of moving creatures, like an army in full retreat, resembling miniature lions with their light manes.

We had great difficulty in extracting from the

inhabitants of the village of Taconda information concerning our destination, and we narrowly escaped, from the confusion of kindred names, starting off in exactly the opposite direction to the one we wished. However, a villager who knew the spot well came to our rescue in the nick of time, and promised to conduct us himself to the great old stones, of which he told us we should find a vast quantity on the heights of Kohaito. At Taconda we were obviously under the coast influence; the inhabitants wore more cowrie beads and brass rings than the people further inland; their type was more of the Shoho than the Abyssinian. Yet they are still Christians, and build themselves churches of quite a different class of architecture to any that we had as yet seen. They are square, stone buildings, with low, square towers



PEASANT'S CAP

on the top, and are exceedingly bare and uninteresting inside. The inhabitants were busily engaged in weaving baskets of straw with long iron nails such as the Abyssinian women use for curling their hair, and they make themselves caps and coverlets of coarse black sheep's hair

—for in the cold season the temperature here is often low.

The population of all this district bears a very bad character, and there are constant raids going on

between the Mussulmans of the coast and these rough mountaineers, with the result that this road, which was in former ages the great entrance into Ethiopia from Adulis to Aksum, is now almost entirely abandoned, and the caravans go in either by Asmara or the gorge of Taranta. During the days before we were at Kohaito, a band of brigands was captured in this district, and we were very glad of our well-armed escort to protect us.

The ascent to the high plateau of Kohaito from the valley below is exceedingly difficult; the wall of rock which surrounds it makes it only possible to ascend at certain points. We commenced the ascent at the southern extremity of the table mountain, and after a while had to descend from our mules and scramble up as best we could. For our baggage mules with the tents and bedding it was exceedingly difficult, but at last we reached the summit, and the rest of our journey was comparatively simple. There are traces of the old roadway still existing on the side we went up; the rocks have been cut in many places; but then boulders have fallen, and trees have grown up, so that the condition of the road has been entirely altered. The summit of Kohaito is one large flat plateau, extending for many miles, always bordered by these inaccessible cliffs; so that it reminded us strongly of pictures of Roraima in South America. It is very rich in water and springs, and offers excellent pasturage; but, owing to the disturbed state of this part of the country, it is now entirely uninhabited. There are traces of ruined huts, and

our guide told us he had been born there, but that his people had been obliged to flee to Taconda and abandon their home on Kohaito.

About an hour's ride after reaching the summit brought us to the ruins, where we pitched our tents for two nights, so as to have plenty of time to examine them carefully.

The great feature of the place is a massive wall of ancient masonry running right across a narrow valley at the summit, and exactly in the centre of the mass of ruins which formerly constituted this town. This wall, which might well have been a specimen of the best period of Hellenic masonry, was built to catch the waters of a small stream which finds its way and forms a shallow valley all down the centre of this plateau, by which means a circular lake, about half a mile in circumference, was formed. On three sides the basin is contained by natural rock, but the southern side is entirely blocked up by this wall, which is a very fine specimen of ancient engineering skill.

The wall is exactly 219 feet in length—the middle part, which had to sustain the greatest body of water, being much more substantially built than the rest. On either side of this substantial part were two sluice gates, 5 ft. 3 in. wide, and the inferior portions of the wall, 46 ft. 4 in. and 74 ft. 4 in. respectively, were built up to the rocks on either side of the depression.

The centre portion of the wall is decidedly the most interesting and is quite intact; it is 99 ft. 4 in.

in length, and is built of very fine mortarless stones, the largest being 5 ft. long and 1 ft. 6½ in. high. Between each course a thin slab is inserted, and each course recedes so as to give the appearance of steps. There are eight courses visible now ; but I expect, owing to the accumulation of soil, there are several more. There have been 'throughs,' or sustaining stones, arranged in this strong portion of



THE DAM AT KOLOE

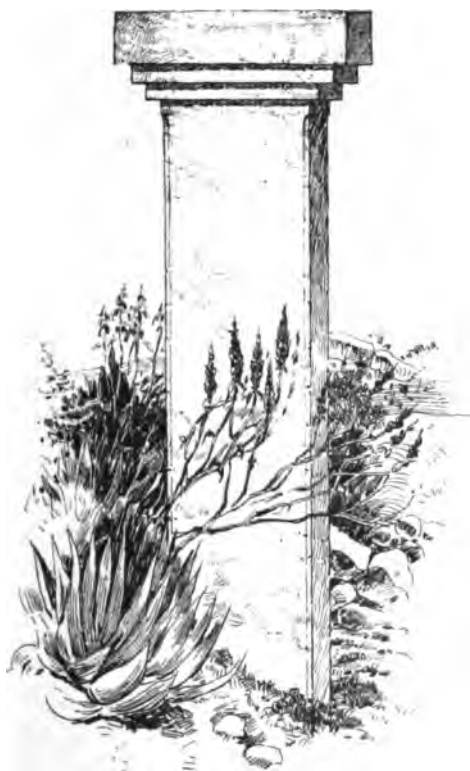
the wall, forming steps in a zigzag pattern, each 'through' being 1 ft. 3 in. apart. On the outer side there is nothing visible, as an enormous amount of soil has accumulated here, in which juniper trees grow in a dense mass up to the level of the wall. Probably, if this accumulation could be cleared away, some inscription or decoration might be revealed on this outer side. The appearance of this wall as it exists now in utter abandonment is a striking testimony to the advance the Sabæan or Greek colonists



on the Red Sea had made, so that here, 7,000 feet above the Red Sea, they had expended such an enormous amount of labour and engineering skill in providing their summer capital with an adequate supply of water. In many points this dam reminds us of the celebrated dam at Mariaba, the Sabæan capital in Yemen, with its sluice gates and its steps, and suggests the supposition that this town was Sabæan in its origin.

The extent of the ruins on Kohaito is most remarkable; on small mounds in every direction, peeping out of juniper trees, are to be seen columns and large blocks of stone, where buildings have stood. The town must have covered many acres when at its best. About 200 yards from the lake, on rising ground by the stream, stood a series of small temples, of one of which we were able to get tolerably accurate measurements. It stood on a platform, 46 feet in length, built of large and regularly cut stones, and was approached by a flight of steps. On the top of this platform are still standing several columns, and their architecture happily enables us to connect it with the architecture of Adulis and the architecture of the old columns previously alluded to at Aksum. These columns were evidently in rows of five, 5 ft. 6 in. apart, and originally supported a slate roof, and the uniformity of all the columns and capitals, both in the ruins at Kohaito and Adulis, is sufficient proof of their kindred origin. They stand only 10 feet high, and are square, with a narrow line cut off the four edges. The capitals

are formed of three square step-like tiers. The columns at Kohaito are made of a sandstone, the stone of the place, whereas those at Adulis are of black basalt, and those at Aksum of granite ;



COLUMN AT KOLOE

but in other respects they are identical. They, of course, belong to a late order of architecture, and probably do not date further back than the centuries just before our era ; but then Adulis did not come into prominence until a late period, and naturally the architecture adopted was one of decadence.

Mr. A. S. Murray, of the British Museum, has called my attention to the similarity of the square shaft and step-like capital to the shaft and covering<sup>1</sup> as shown in the Harpy tomb from Xanthus in Lycia. This similarity is very striking when the other architectural points, traceable to Asia Minor in this part of the world, are taken into account—namely, the beam ends on the monoliths at Aksum, and the imitation and receding doors and windows. That an influence from Asia Minor was at work here is pretty certain, and it is easily to be accounted for in the days of the third Ptolemy, who extended his victories over all that part of Asia Minor, and may have transplanted artificers to his new colonies on the Red Sea from the conquered cities.

We rode in all directions over this high plateau of Kohaito, but found nothing more interesting than the ruins around the lake. Evidently the area covered by buildings was large, and two miles from the lake are traces of temples and other buildings still to be seen. Most likely, from its high and impregnable position, the table-land of Kohaito was used by the inhabitants of Adulis as a summer residence. The air here is delightful, water abundant, and easily reached from Adulis in two, or at the most three, days.

The great question to be considered is the name of this place, and whether we have any allusion to it in early geographers; and to this, I think, we can

<sup>1</sup> See *Catalogue of Archaic Greek Sculpture* in the British Museum.

give a very satisfactory reply, though we found no inscriptions to help us, owing, I think, to the fact that the stone employed is principally sandstone, and worn away by the action of the atmosphere, and it would have been difficult to convey marble to this spot. The anonymous author of the 'Periplus of the Red Sea' tells us, after describing Adulis: 'Three days' journey inland was Koloe, the first market where ivory could be procured. From Koloe it was five days' journey to Aksuma, where all the ivory was collected.' From this very explicit statement Lejean and other travellers have imagined that Koloe was at Halai or Digsa; but, as I have mentioned, there is not a single trace of ancient ruins there, nor are there any ruins within many miles of this spot. So I think we can fairly determine that the ruins on Kohaito are those of the ancient city of Koloe. Furthermore, it is exactly where it should be, according to the description in the 'Periplus,' three days from Adulis and five from Aksum, and on a mountain, immediately below which the ancient trade route into Ethiopia passed.

Claudius Ptolemy, in his geography, also mentions Koloe as being in this position; but, curiously enough, he also mentions further inland a lake which he calls *Κολόη λίμνη*, which he distinguishes from *Κολόη πόλις*. Two circumstances with regard to this statement strike me as curious; firstly, that the Greek name *Κολόη*, which was the name of this city, should also be attached to a lake far inland, which, for want of any other, geographers have con-

sidered to be Lake Tzana, and which Stephanus Byzantius distinctly tells us was called  $\psi\epsilon\beta\omega$  by the ancients; and, secondly, that the chief feature of the town of Koloe, as we have already seen, is a lake in its very centre. I think it is not unfair to suppose that Ptolemy may have got a little confused in writing his account of this part of the country; that he found Koloe city and Koloe lake in his notes, and, not fancying the two were identical, put the Koloe lake further inland, and added the statement, 'from which flows the river Astapus.'<sup>1</sup> It is a small point, but the elucidation of small points in the meagre material left us for the reconstruction of early African geography is to my mind always worthy of discussion. A stream really does flow through this lake, and in the uncertainty of geographical data at that period it is quite possible it may have been considered a source of the Astapus, as the river Mareb, which flows only a few miles away, certainly was.

During the two days we spent on Kohaito we suffered considerably from the inclemency of the weather. We had a thunderstorm the first evening, and were enveloped in the thick impenetrable mist which is often experienced in this borderland between the high plateau and the hot district of the

<sup>1</sup> Agatharcides (ap. Strabo) and Diodorus Siculus give us the Psebean mountains, which are undoubtedly the mountains of Abyssinia, facing the Red Sea. Strabo has a lake Psebo 'above Meroe,' usually identified with the Tzana lake. Theophrastus also has an island Psebo above Meroe. From these facts it would seem that the name Psebo is older than Koloe.

sea coast. The second day was gloomy but fine, and on the morning of our departure the ground was covered with a light hoarfrost.

Certainly I think the ruins of Koloe may safely claim to be the most elevated ruins known of any ancient town.

Our guide professed to be able to take us down by another road on the western side of the mountain, but he was unable to find it, and after riding about for some hours we became hopelessly lost. Luckily for us, as we were wandering along through a thick forest, we came across three woodmen, who were carrying to their home the trunk of a big tree which they had cut down. They put us in the right path, and we descended by an exceedingly steep road, which bore ample traces of having been a very fair road at one time, and probably the principal approach to Koloe in ancient times. The sustaining walls which had helped to keep up the road were still there, and with many twists and turns we finally got down into the valley below. Here, on slightly rising ground, we found in a dense mass of jungle the ruins of another ancient town or village, which stood just above what must have been the old caravan road from Adulis to Aksum. In the midst of it stood a small temple, on a built platform, with two columns left standing of precisely the same style of architecture as those above. This must have been a village or halting place at the foot of the hill on which Koloe was built, where caravans going and returning could halt ; and here, too, a little excava-

tion might yield some interesting results with regard to the trade route, and the nature of the commerce which was carried on in ancient times up this road into the heart of Africa.

We were obliged to return to Halai, because we had left our luggage there ; but if we had been able to follow the old line of road from this point, which gradually leads down to the valley of the Addas and the coast, we should have saved a long *détour*, and might possibly have seen other traces of earlier occupation. As it was, it was quite dark when we got back to Halai, owing to our having lost our way on the descent from Koloe.

One thing, however, I should have been sorry to have missed, namely, the stupendous descent of Shumfaitou, where a narrow road by countless zig-zags has lately been constructed by the Italians for mule traffic, which leads down almost abruptly from the high plateau at Halai to the valley of the Addas below, a descent of close upon 5,000 feet. During this remarkable descent we enjoyed scenery of the most exquisite character ; before us lay stretched the whole length of the high plateau of Kohaito, from which it seemed almost impossible to imagine that we had only returned the day before. To our left extended fold upon fold of deep blue mountains, shutting in the narrow twisting valley which was to lead us down to the sea. Behind us rose the stupendous wall of the high plateau, on which we had now lived for so many weeks. As we descended, the air became stifflingly close. The valley of the Addas

is exceedingly narrow, shut in by walls of rocks, which reflect the sun in all its tropical fervour; tamarind trees, eucalyptus, and others of the torrid zone, here take the place of those which prefer a cooler climate. It is almost impossible to imagine a more sudden change than that afforded by the short three hours' descent from Halai to the little Arab village of Mahio, deep down in the Addas valley.

As with the vegetation, so it was with the people: all is changed. Arab-speaking Mussulmans in miserable hovels are the sole inhabitants of these valleys debouching on the sea. Mahio, during the late famine, was a great market for grain, and the Italians had a fort here to regulate the distribution of relief to the thousands of Abyssinians who came down here to look for sustenance. This is now entirely abandoned; but an Italian resides at Mahio, who has developed the only definite industry which we saw throughout the whole of the colony, namely, the making of cords and ropes out of a sort of aloe called the *Sanservera Ehrenbergii*, which industry bids fair to be a great success, as most of the ropes for ships on this coast of the Red Sea are made of it. Heaps of Arab women were engaged in beating the leaves of the aloes in the stream, so as to leave the fibre, which is eventually spun into ropes. The whole valley of the Addas is full of this plant, which owes its discovery to the German botanist, Ehrenberg, whereas I believe Schweinfurt was the first to recognise its value for practical purposes.

Freaks of nature in towering rocks and narrow



gorges were all that we had to look upon for the next two days, as we gradually approached the sea. The scenery of this approach to Abyssinia is excessively weird and grand, but exceedingly monotonous, and we were intensely relieved when at length we came out on to the narrow belt of plain once more, which



CAPITAL OF COLUMN. ADULIS

borders Africa, and late one evening found ourselves by the sea again at Arkiko.

We undertook the journey to Zula more from curiosity than in any hope of finding anything, and the net result of our expedition to the ruins of the ancient Adulis was the discovery, sufficiently important in itself, that the columns and capitals of Adulis, Koloe, the village below it, and Aksum, all belonged to the same order of architecture, and all

owed their origin to the mercantile influence on the coast.

We took a boat from Arkiko, and, thanks to a favourable breeze, we were able to pitch our tent on shore, about an hour from the modern Zula, and an equal distance from the ancient Adulis, just before the sun went down. Early next morning we communicated with the Sheikh of Zula, who sent down mules and asses to bring us to his village, and before midday we had our tents pitched in the midst of the remains of what once was the town of Adulis.

Strabo did not know of the existence of this town. Pliny and Claudius Ptolemy, and the anonymous author of the 'Periplus of the Red Sea,' knew it well as the emporium for the products of the Ethiopian kingdom. But our great authority for the existence and history of Adulis is the monk Cosmas Indicopleustes, who copied the inscriptions there, which we have already referred to: 'Adule is a city of Ethiopia, and the port of communication with Axiomis, and the whole nation of which that city is the capital. The town is two miles from the shore, and as you enter it there is still remaining a chair or throne, which appertained to one of the Ptolemies, behind which stood the celebrated stone.' Bœckh gives the inscription in full, in his 'Corpus Inscriptionum,' so there is no occasion to do more than refer to it here.

The possibilities of finding it again are great. In fact, the nature of the ruin which has come upon Adulis makes it probable that a systematic excava-

tion might here yield untold treasures. Adulis has simply been buried in the sand and alluvial deposits which the adjacent stream, now silted up, has washed down. Some slight excavations were made in one or two of the mounds at the time of the English expedition, which brought to light the above-mentioned basalt capitals and columns, which compare with those of Koloe and Aksum. But the ruins cover a vast area, and consist of a conglomeration of mounds, each of which represents an important building overgrown with a low scrub. So that the work to accomplish anything would have to be systematic, and presenting labour not much less than that of unearthing Pompeii itself. For the history of Africa in remote ages this work would be of exceptional interest and value, but the excessive heat and unhealthiness of the climate would also be a further bar to the accomplishment of this end.

We stayed only one night at Adulis; for, with the exception of the few columns unearthed by the English, there was nothing to see, and the heat was terrific. With a strong breeze behind us we reached Massowah in six hours, and there brought our Abyssinian wanderings to a termination.

## CHAPTER XIII

## ON THE INSCRIPTIONS FROM YEHA AND AKSUM

BY DR. DAVID HEINRICH MÜLLER,

*Professor of the University of Vienna, and Fellow of the Imperial Academy of Science, Vienna*<sup>1</sup>PART I.—*The Inscriptions from Yeha*

THE small Sabæan inscriptions found by Mr. Bent in Yeha, the old temple near Adoua, unfortunately do not provide us with the name of any king or any date by which the age could be decided with absolute certainty. Their existence, however, on Abyssinian soil is in itself of the highest historic interest, because they testify by their presence there to the connection between the peoples of South Arabia and of Abyssinia, which is set forth in the list of peoples in the 10th chapter of Genesis; and they also testify to the migration into Ethiopia of the Sabæans—a fact which Greek authors allude to. That these were not isolated or sporadic colonisations is testified by the magnificence of the buildings themselves, and that they employed the best style of Sabæan art is testified by the artistically engraved inscriptions,

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Müller will publish in the *Akademie der Wissenschaft* at Vienna fuller particulars on these inscriptions and photographic facsimiles of the impressions.

which, whether in incised or raised work, remind one of the most beautiful of the examples we have of Sabæan art.

We are also in the position, from palæographic grounds, to assert that these small fragments, as well as the buildings into which they were built, date from a very remote antiquity, about the 7th or 8th century B.C. It is well known that Sabæan history falls into three great periods, which are distinctly divided from each other according to the titles which the kings of these periods bore in the inscriptions. In the first period the ruler of Saba bears the title *Mukrab Saba*. In the second period he is called *Melek Saba*. In the third period *Melek Saba wa Raidân*, king of Saba and Raidân.<sup>1</sup>

The inscriptions before us might also fall into this palæographical division, which has been laid down on grounds connected with the history of the script;<sup>2</sup> and the following signs which are here briefly added will serve to show the peculiar characteristics and the history of the development of the script.

M.	𐩇	becomes	gradually	𐩇
Sh.	𐩈	„	„	𐩈
W.	𐩉	„	„	𐩉𐩉
R.	𐩊	„	„	𐩊
F.	𐩋	„	„	𐩋 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Four of these inscriptions were also copied by Salt, *Voyage in Abyssinia*, 481 seq.

<sup>2</sup> See Professor Müller's *Burgen und Schlösser Südarabiens*.

<sup>3</sup> See Mordman and Müller, *Sabäische Denkmäler*, 105 ff.



sides of the four-sided capital of a column, and are written *boustrophedon*; they are parts of one inscription of which the second fragment is the last.

No. 1 is 0·50 metre long by 0·14 wide.

No. 2 is 0·45 metre long by 0·14 wide.

*Translation*: [and placed under the protection of the Deity]

1. . . . Their souls, and the souls of Ilas, and
2. Ilagad, and Ilakab and their possessions
3. which they have gained for themselves . . .  
Yafa<sup>m</sup> in Haw
4. [Before each that] they [will annihilate]

About the script and the *boustrophedon* way of writing we have already spoken. It is probable that this is the termination formula of a building inscription. The place name *Haw* is to be remarked, and according to my knowledge it also appears in an inscription from Al-Higr.<sup>1</sup>

YEHA 3. (*Impression by Mr. Bent.*)

ḤXʿ⊙|ḤḤḤḤ      ⊙)Ḥ⊙      )Xḥ

Likewise No. 3 goes round two corners of a capital.

Length, m. 0·60; width, 0·12.

In consequence of the fragmentary character of this inscription, and the peculiar small words, I do not dare to offer a translation of it.

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Müller's *Epigraphische Denkmäler aus Arabien*.

YEHA 4. (*Impression by Mr. Bent, copy by Mr. Salt, p. 434.*)

Fragment built into a wall of temple :

○ † Π Υ Ι

Length, m. 0·17 ; width, m. 0·12.

*Translation* : ‘ He went into the valley,’ or something similar.

YEHA 5. (*Impression by Mr. Bent.*)

⊙ ⊙ | † ⊙ Ḥ | ⊙ Υ Χ Ψ [Π]

This inscription is on two sides of a corner stone.

Length, m. 0·40 ; width, 0·15.

*Translation* : ‘ He built his house A.W.M. and . . . ’

This little fragment is of the greatest importance for the consideration of the name of the locality. Mr. Bent, in a letter addressed to me, and dated May 24, 1893, expressed the following supposition :—

‘ Yeha is the modern name of the spot where I have found the Himyaritic inscriptions ; it lies on the road from Aksum to Adulis. There also I found a temple which is excellently constructed, and other remains, as, for example, monoliths and buildings of huge stones, which certainly belong to a very remote antiquity. When I had compared all authorities of the ancients, I came to the following conclusion :—

- ‘ 1. It cannot be Koloe, which is mentioned in the “Periplus,” § 4, and which place I have found, where one would expect it to be,



namely, in the neighbourhood of Halai, on a mountain plateau, 7,000 feet above Adulis, with several temples and a wall which formed a reservoir.

- ‘2. Nonnosus (see Müller’s “Hist. Min.,” W. 179 f.) mentions *Αὔα* as a *χωρίον* between Adulis and Aksum.
- ‘3. In the Adulitan monument, Part II., a list of people and place names is given, which the author of the inscription had conquered, and amongst them is Ava.

‘It seems to me very probable that Ava is identical with the modern Yeha, and through the rise of Aksum the old Sabæan colony of Ava seems to have gradually fallen into decay.’

Now, in truth, this little fragment from Yeha appears in a most remarkable manner to verify Bent’s hypothesis. I read and deciphered the above inscription before Bent communicated his supposition to me in the above-given letter, but now I recognise in ‘A. W. M.’ the old Ava, as in M. at the end of the line we have the terminal or final syllable, which in the Sabæan language signifies the end of a substantive.

To further explain this fragment I will add one point more. ‘*Bayt*’ means, in Sabæan, ‘house,’ and also ‘castle’ or ‘temple.’ In this sense the word often occurs in building inscriptions. We see here also an old temple, *Ava*, which was erected by the Sabæans in Abyssinia.

In fact, we know from the Sabæan inscriptions in South Arabia that the god *Almaqah* had temples in Marib, Serwah, and other places, and was honoured in a temple called *Ava*, and on two bronze tables from Amrân he is named ‘*Lord of Ava, the castle Alw.*’ Two women in the neighbourhood of Maryab (Marib) dedicated a statue to Almaqah, the Lord of Ava. Also, upon an inscription in Serwah the Lord of Ava is mentioned. Therefore it seems to me that we may safely recognise in our fragments an Almaqah temple which gave its name to the place. I leave it to be decided whether these inscriptions relate to the Sabæan temple erected on Abyssinian ground, or whether they relate to another temple of a similar name elsewhere.

YEHA 6 and 7. (*Impressions by Mr. Bent, copies by Mr. Salt.*)

4) 00 | 4 | 11 | 19 | 4 | 6 | 3  
 14 | X | 19 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 3 | X | H | 0 | 0 | 1 | X | 3 | 3 | 11 | 0

6. Length, m. 0·35; width, 0·12

7. Length, m. 0·65; width, 0·12.

*Translation*: ‘Aknag, son of Waran . . . .’

‘And Bashmat and Adat<sup>m</sup>. of the family (or place) Ark.’

Also this is a building inscription, and must therefore continue with the words ‘have built,’ &c. These two inscriptions are in very high relief, and obviously form parts of one and the same inscrip-

tion, and they came from the doorway of the ancient temple at Yeha. These inscriptions likewise show the oldest letters of the Sabæan alphabet. Can this name Ark be compared with the name Arkiko on the coast near Massowah?

YEHA 8. (*Copy only by Mr. Salt, p. 431.*)

† 1 | 3 0 9 4 |

The only thing to be recognised in this fragment is the proper name 'Hajw.'

YEHA 9. (*Copy only as a monogram by Mr. Salt.*)

3 6 = 3 6 11

## PART II.—*The Inscriptions from Aksum.*

### 1. THE BILINGUAL INSCRIPTION. (*Impression by Mr. Bent.*)

On the back of the Greek inscription at Aksum Mr. Salt remarked that he saw traces of an old Ethiopian inscription, from which he copied some groups of letters more or less correctly. After carefully putting these together, one could not make out a single word from his facsimile. Also, the forms of the letters were not properly given by him, and the supposition was held that this inscription was partly in Sabæan and partly in Ethiopian letters. But this was not correct. The alphabet is still quite Sabæan, but its form belongs to the latest period of this script.

As far as the contents show, it is evident that the Semitic inscription on the back of the Greek is, for a part at least, identical. In fact, the commencement of the inscription is an exact word-for-word translation of the Greek monument—a circumstance by which the deciphering of the very worn and destroyed Semitic text has been greatly assisted.

From a careful examination of Mr. Bent's impression, it is evident that the inscription originally consisted of forty lines. But the Greek, which is written in much greater letters, only consists of thirty-one lines, and, on an average, three Greek lines contain the material of only one Semitic. So, therefore, the Semitic inscription must have contained at least three times as much material as the Greek. Unfortunately, the side of the stone on which the Semitic inscription was engraved was much exposed to the weather, and only with great trouble can the first six lines be satisfactorily read. From line 7–15 there are single phrases legible, from line 16–25 single words, and from line 26 to the end only single letters. At the time of Salt the lines at both the beginning and the end must have been still distinct, since he gives facsimilia of both; but these are entirely useless.

The inscription is 0·98 metre wide and 1·56 metre high.

## No. 1.

*Translation.*

1. Aizan<sup>m</sup>, king of Aksum<sup>m</sup>, and of Homer<sup>m</sup>, and Raydan<sup>m</sup>, and Habaset<sup>m</sup>, and Saba<sup>m</sup>, and

2. Silh<sup>m</sup> and Tiya<sup>m</sup>, and Kas<sup>m</sup>, and Bega<sup>m</sup>, king of kings, son of Mahrem<sup>m</sup>, who is never triumphed

3. over by his foes. Since the people of Begâ had revolted he sent his two brothers Shazân and Hade<sup>m</sup>fah, and made against them

4. war, and when they had reached them they overpowered them—namely, six kings, with their tribes

5. and their furniture, which was not fixed to the ground, with their children and their wo-

6. men and their servants . . . [also they] took the sucklings with their mothers . . .

7. . . . gave to drink (?) . . . and their cattle.

8. . . . and they presented them and provided them with bread . . .

9. whilst . . . and they drove them forth from their lands.

10. . . . to . . . and their meat (?)

11. that they gave them to eat . . .

12. . . .

13. Delivery (?) . . . and they adorned.

14. . . . where their land is great.

15. . . . and they would take.

16 and 17. . . .

18. To Mahrem<sup>m</sup>. . . .

21. and their land . . .

24. Their sucklings (?).

1. 001857001X3740014490017374001746161715890
2. X95H1773715716171770017460017720017717

CW

E



1404

1784

$$\begin{array}{c} \times \\ \circ \\ \circ \end{array}$$

子



*Remarks on this Inscription.*

To show the relationship between the Greek and the Semitic inscriptions, I have thought it best to set out the first ten lines of the Greek inscription and the Semitic translation line for line.

<i>Greek.</i>	<i>Semitic.</i>
1. Ἀειζάνας βασιλεὺς Ἀξωμι- τῶν καὶ	(1) Aizan <sup>m</sup> , king of Aksum, and
2. Ὀμηριτῶν καὶ τοῦ Ῥαιδᾶν καὶ Αἰ-	of Homēr <sup>m</sup> and Raydân <sup>m</sup> and Haba
3. θιόπων καὶ Σαβαιτῶν καὶ τοῦ Σιλεῆ	Shat <sup>m</sup> and Saba <sup>m</sup> and (2) Silh <sup>m</sup>
4. καὶ τοῦ Τιαμῶ καὶ Βουγαιτῶν καὶ τοῦ	and Tiâmô <sup>m</sup> and Kas <sup>m</sup> and
5. Κάσου βυσιλεὺς βασιλέων νιὸς θεοῦ	Begâ <sup>m</sup> , king of kings, son of
6. ἀνικητοῦ Ἀρεως ἀτακτησάν- των	Mahrem <sup>m</sup> , who is not triumphed over by his foes. When they revolted
7. κατὰ καιρὸν τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Βουγαι-	(3) The people of Bega
8. τῶν ἀπεστίλαμεν τοὺς ἡμε- τέρους	we sent our two
9. ἀδελφοὺς Σαῖζανᾶ καὶ τὸν Ἀδήφας	brothers Shazân <sup>m</sup> and Hade-fah
10. τοὺτους πολεμῆσαι	To make war upon them.

As we have stated, the first three lines are almost word for word with the Greek text; the slight differences which appear in the two texts are not of any material importance. In the Greek text the Bugaeiton are placed before the Kasu, as in both the Gez inscriptions of Aksum, whilst in the Semitic the Bega are placed after the Kasu. That the difference is due to the existence of the war, about which this inscription tells us, is scarcely probable. For we see



on the Greek inscription the Bega placed before the Kasu, and we know from the Adulitan monument that the founder of the Aksumite kingdom had already subjected the people of Bega. The placing of the people of Bega after Kasu can only be looked upon as an oversight of the writers, and one can but come to the conclusion that the title of the king was not yet quite thoroughly established. A further difference is the placing before the god's name the word θεοῦ, also the use of the term ἀνικήτην instead of the relative sentence 'who is not triumphed over by his foes' is to be attributed to the difference of speech. The phrase κατὰ καιρόν is not inserted in the Semitic text, and, lastly, the change of person in line 8 is worthy of notice, and in the Semitic text also the use of the dual.

From the fourth line the Semitic text no longer follows the Greek word for word, and in certain parts they deviate pretty considerably, and often follow in a different order, but they can in several places be recognised as having about the same turn of phrase.

*Lines 4, 5.* The corresponding phrases are here set out together :

'And when they had reached them, they overpowered them,' is the equivalent of the Greek, lines 10-12 and 18-19 : καὶ παραδεδωκότων αὐτῶν ὑποτάξαντες αὐτοὺς ἤγαγον [πρὸς ἡμᾶς] . . . οἷτινες ἦσαν τὸν ἀριθμὸν βασιλείσκοι ἐξ σὺν τῷ ὄχλῳ αὐτῶν.

*Line 5.* 'And their furniture, which was not fixed to the ground,' corresponds to the Greek, line 14 : καὶ κτηνῶν νωτοφόρων.

*Lines 5, 6.* 'With their children and their women and servants' represents *μετὰ καὶ τῶν θρεμμάτων αὐτῶν* (line 12). The words *βοῶν τε ριβ καὶ προβάτων σκδ* appear to be absent in the Semitic, unless they stood on the obliterated part of line 6.

*Line 7.* If the reading and translation 'gave to drink' is right, one must recognise *ποτίζοντες* in line 17. The word 'cattle' at the end of the line is to be identified with *βόεσω*, line 15.

*Line 8.* 'And they presented them, and provided them with bread' is translated in the Greek by *τούτους οὖν δωρησάμενοι* (line 23), and *ἀννωμεμένοι . . . ἄρτους σιτίους* (lines 20, 21).

*Line 9.* 'And they drove them forth from their lands' is visibly *αὐτοὺς μετοικήσαμεν καὶ κατεστήσαμεν ἐς τινα τόπον τῆς ἡμετέρας χώρας* (24-26). The remaining readable and decipherable phrases no longer correspond with the Greek text. No wonder, for the Semitic version must have been three times as large, and must, therefore, have contained much that is not in the Greek.

Though the Greek inscription from Aksum has been often commented upon, and its historical and geographical importance already sufficiently brought forward, yet the Semitic text offers a number of interesting explanations, which I will briefly set out here. It is known that the inscription, like the Adulitan monument, has been set up by a king of Aksum, named Aizanes, who calls himself son of the unconquered Ares in thankfulness for the victories which his two brothers and their armies have gained

against the rebellious Bega. He offers to Ares three standing statues—one gold, one silver, and one iron. The king, therefore, was a heathen, and acquainted with the Greek religion and culture. In a letter from the Emperor Constantine (356 A.D.) to Aizanus and Sazanus at the end they are termed his ἀδελφοὶ τιμιώτατοι; the altar in this inscription is distinctly mentioned. This inscription is important, particularly in the title of the king. He not only names himself king of Aksum and other African countries (Tiamô, *Βουγαιετῶν καὶ τοῦ Κάσου*), but also the king of the Homerites and of the Raydan and the Ethiopians and the Sabæans and of Sileê, from which it can safely be seen that Aksumite kings had carried their conquests into the kingdom of the Sabæans and Himyars, and had ruled for a longer or shorter time on the other side of the Red Sea. This circumstance is nowhere else mentioned by Greek or even Arabian writers, but it is none the less true, and proved by relative circumstances. Since we know, on the one hand, from the monument of Adulis, that an Aksumite king made a campaign to the Arabian coast, and, on the other hand, we know of a conquest of South Arabia by the Aksumites in 525 A.D., we must conclude for certain that the war between the rival kingdoms went on meanwhile.

The founder of the Greek inscription at Aksum is called Ἀειζάνας (in the letter of Constantine Aizanus), and much trouble has been taken to find the Ethiopian equivalent for the Greek name. The most approved hypothesis is the one that Aizanes

corresponds to the King Ela-San, of the Ethiopian list of kings (351–364), and people have gone so far as to find a form of Greek flattery in the name in the sound of ἀεὶ ζῆν, ‘to live for ever.’ A. Dillmann alone has, with very critical insight, refused this identification; and though he, on etymological grounds, identifies the name with Du-Gezen, he has made no attempt to show any historical proofs, from the undependable Ethiopian list of kings, or the even less reliable chronology. Others, again, have tried to identify Aizanes and Sazanus with Ela-Abraha and Ela-Asbeha, the last of whom is described by the Ethiopian accounts as the founder of the chief holy place in Aksum, in whose reign the conversion of the Ethiopians to Christendom is said to have taken place. The untrustworthiness of this supposition Dillmann has also pointed out in his second treatise (p. 17).

Dr. Edward Glaser has also a theory that he has discovered not only both these kings in the South Arabian legends, but also can identify Aizanes with Ela-Asbeha (‘Sketches of the History and Geography of Arabia,’ ii. pp. 524–526).

Unfortunately, all these theories, founded upon the supposed obliteration of the stone, are now disproved by Mr. Bent’s impression. The inscription is able to be read in part, and both names stand written in Sabæan letters, the Arabic equivalents for which are Ayzân and Shazân. Therefore, identification with the other names is put out of the question; but, at the same time, the two words in the Semitic script afford us no assistance in unravelling the mystery,

only in establishing the incorrectness of all theories as yet advanced.

There is yet another word in the inscription, which is of historical interest. I allude to the word Habashat<sup>m</sup>, which corresponds to *Αἰθῶπων* in the Greek text. The titles of the king in the Greek inscription of Aksum differs distinctly from that in the Semitic inscription, particularly in that of King 'of the Ethiopians.' Furthermore, we get the assurance that the term '*Ethiopia*' was not for the Aksumites identical with the kingdom of Aksum, as has already been pointed out in reference to the monument of Adulis. The founder of the monument at Adulis had not yet conquered the Himyaro-Sabæan kingdom, but had, on his warlike expedition to the Arabian coast, reached as far as (ἔως) the frontier of the Sabæan countries. Also, he had not yet subjected the lands of the Ethiopians, but only the frontier people in the neighbourhood of (μέχρι) Ethiopia. In our inscription the king is lord not only of the Himyaro-Sabæan kingdom, but also of Ethiopia. The mention of Ethiopia after the Homerites and Raydan, and before the Sabæans and Salhîn, as Dillmann has already rightly remarked, shows that it is only a question of an appanage of the Himyarite kingdom, which, after the conquest of the mother country, falls *ipso facto* into the conqueror's hands.

Now, from the author of the 'Periplus of the Red Sea' we learn that in his time (A.D. 64) Azania was under the suzerainty of the Himyar kings of Zafâr. This territory appears to have been included with

Ethiopia. The word Ethiopia, which at different times has had quite a different geographical signification, has created much confusion in the investigation of historical facts. Originally it may have signified all the countries south of Egypt, and Herodotus again placed it further south. In the inscription of Adulis it signifies a district lying south-west; and finally, in the inscription of Aksum, it appears to be identical with Azania. In the middle ages Ethiopia was for the first time used to describe all the territories which the former kings of Aksum had conquered.

The word Habashat had a similar fate to that of Ethiopia. The Arabians meant by it the kingdom which we now call Abyssinia, but against that there is no doubt that in our inscription it signifies Ethiopia in the sense which we have defined it above. It need not be said that the kingdom of Aksum is not designated by it, and it is to be remarked that the word Habashat appears here for the first time in an Ethiopian text. On the other hand, we find Arabian writers use it several times in Sabæan-Himyaritic inscriptions.

The chief places are these: Firstly, in Glaser's collection, No. 828-30, in his sketches, p. 188, which have only just been published and explained by J. H. Mordtmann. My interpretation varies somewhat from those of Glaser and Mordtmann, who also differ strongly from one another. In my opinion this inscription was erected by Alhân Nalfân, King of the Sabæans, and the general purport is as follows:—

‘Alhân Nalfan King of Saba dedicates to the God Ta’lab . . . a wide stretching district . . . with

all belonging to it, water rights, fortifications and terraces as far as the column and pillar, and all the vallies and vegetable lands as far as this column, &c. . . . as a sign of thanksgiving and praise that Gadarat King of the *Habashat* has made a treaty of arms and contract with him in order to make him his brother ; and this brotherhood between him and Gadarat and the host of the Abhashan was perfect, and they plighted themselves to make war and peace together against everyone who should raise themselves up against them as enemies, and that they should become brothers truly and faithfully. Salhin (the house of the King of Saba) and Zurarai (the house of this King of the *Habashat*) and Alhân (King of Saba) and Gadarat (King of the *Habashat*) all one with another ; and they gave thanks that their brotherhood had become perfect with the King of the *Habashat*, as their brotherhood was perfect with Jada ab Ghailan, King of Hadramaut before this dedication, &c.'

The four words Salhin, Zuraran, Alhân, and Gadarat are very important. Alhân we know to have been King of Saba, and Gadarat King of Hadramaut. Salhin is the well-known name of a castle of the Kings of Saba mentioned on the Aksum inscription. So we can well perceive that Zuraran stands in the same relation to the King of *Habashat* as Salhin to the King of Saba ; in other words that Zuraran is the name of a castle of a King of the *Habashat*. That this king had not common property with the King of Aksum appears to me evident. This inscription,

which is the most important of Glaser's collection, comes from the chief sanctuary of Ta'lab in Rigan.

Secondly, another inscription from this neighbourhood also mentions the Habashat ('Sabäische Denkmäler,' No. 9), and in other places in Glaser's 'sketches,' there are further allusions to expeditions of Sabæan leaders against the Habashat in Yemen, and he also alludes to later texts in which these people are mentioned.

Lastly, the inscription of Hisn Gharâb must be mentioned, which runs as follows:—'Samyafa' Ashwa, and his sons . . . have inscribed this memorial in the fortress Mawigat [= Hisn Gharâb] when they rebuilt their walls and their . . . and their water tank, and their mountain path, and fortified themselves therein, after they had conquered the Habashat and the Abessiniei (Ahabashân) they made the trade road to the Land of Himyar after they had killed the King of Himyar and his relatives (princes) the Himyarites and the Arhabistites. In the month of Higgatên, in the year 640.'

If all this is correct, then we must identify the Homerite *Ἑσμφαῖος* with *Samyafa*, who, after having killed Du Nuvas and his eight relations, as Procopius (I. 20) says, was raised to the rank of a tributary king by Elesbaas (Ela-Asbeha) the king of Aksum. The circumstances described in this inscription, namely, the murder of the Himyarite king and his relations by Habashat, as Jos. Halévy was the first to show, refers to the murder of Du Nuvas.

We see, therefore, at about the year 515 A.D. the



Himyar Samyafa mentions the invasion of the King of Aksum as setting out from Habashat. Therefore, the name Habashat already was applied to the kingdom of Aksum.

Also a Greek source gives Ahbashan as the plural form of Habashat. Steph. Byz. says: '[Ἀβασσηνοὶ ἔθνος] Ἀραβίας, Οὐράνιος ἐν Ἀραβικῶν τρίτῳ: μετὰ τοὺς Σαβαίους Χατραμῶται Ἀβασσηνοὶ· καὶ πάλιν: ἡ χώρα τῶν Ἀβασσηνῶν σμύρνην καὶ ὄσσον καὶ θυμίαμα καὶ κέρπαθον.' Uranius says, in his third book of the 'Arabica': 'After the Sabæans follow the Hadramotites Abasena,' and later on: 'The land of Abasena brings myrrh, osson (κόστος?), incense, and kerpap (bark of the cinnamon tree).' In the Sabæan monuments the authors place the Abasener (Ahbashan) in the furthest 'myrrh region' of Ptolemy in the land of *Madhig* of the Arabian authors, and Hamdani (93.20) furthermore places a town in this district.

From the above points we can establish the following facts:—

1. That from the beginning of the sixth century, A.D., the kingdom of Aksum was known by the name of Habashat.
2. That in the middle of the fourth century, A.D., the Habashat were completely separate from, but tributaries of the kings of Aksum.
3. The Habashat were for a long period sometimes at war and sometimes allied to the kings of Saba, and often made raids into the Arabian kingdom.

In order now to bring these various significations

into unity with each other, I imagine the development of this word to be as follows: Habashat, from the root H.B.S š, 'to collect,' meaning originally 'union,' 'society,' of Sabæan and Himyarite merchants, whose object was to exploit the incense and cinnamon countries. The chief scene of the activity of the Company was the African coasts, the incense coast of Barbaria, and further south on the coast-line which is described as Azania. The Company had, however, also depôts in various parts of Arabia, where they organised themselves—as, for example, in the land of Mahdig. The lands situated on the African coast were known to the Sabæans under the name of Habashat; in earlier times the coast depôt district of Adulis, where it is known that they had factories, may have been included under this term. When the Aksumite kings took possession of the whole of the coast district, they then appear as the rightful successors of the Habashat, and they would not give the name of Habashat to the inconsiderable Aksum, but to the mother country, whose worth they had already learnt to prize. The development of the history of these lands, from several points of view, is therefore to be found impressed in both these words, Ethiopia and Habashat.

The peculiar worth and peculiar significance and importance of this old Semitic version of the inscription of Aksum lies not so much on the historical side, as that had been learnt already from the Greek text, but in the script and language, about which we shall speak later.

No. 2. THE KING'S INSCRIPTION OF AKSUM. (*Impression by Mr. Bent.*)

Amongst Bent's most important finds is the twenty-nine-lined inscription of Aksum, which also is in Sabæan script from right to left. In distinction to the bilingual of Aksum (No. 1), it is most extremely carefully worked and in a certain manner adorned. The letters are neither obliterated nor destroyed in spite of the extreme fineness of the engraving, and the signs covering the stone are, with very few exceptions, easily legible. What very much diminishes the value of this inscription is the fragmentary condition of the stone: the first six lines lack a third part on the right-hand side; from the sixth line downwards, on the right and left-hand side, half is lacking; the first five lines contain the title of the king, which we can complete from the bilingual inscription of Aksum and from both the Gez inscriptions. From this we learn that the lines had about thirty signs, in each of which in the upper part of the inscription there remain ten, and in the lower from fifteen to sixteen. How many lines are missing below we cannot even guess.

The alphabet belongs, as that of the bilingual inscription, to the latest period of the Sabæan epoch. The sign 8 (th) does not occur; on the contrary X (sh) does, which in Bent No. 1 is not to be found. Besides this, there are two new signs, differentiated from older ones, of which we will speak later on.

The next thing is to decide upon the relative age

of this inscription. We must date it, on palæographic and linguistic grounds, between the bilingual inscription and the two Gez inscriptions. It need hardly be said that it is older than the Gez inscription, where the formation of the old Ethiopian writing is fully carried out. That it is later than the bilingual inscription is proved by the lack of a Greek translation. The speech and script had meanwhile taken a national character. This is not only shown in the absence of a Greek translation, but in the abandonment of older Sabæan words and formations. Thus in the bilingual inscription we have the earliest word for king (*malik*), whilst here we have almost exclusively the word *negous* introduced. The old Semitic word *bin*, 'the son of,' is here supplanted by the later '*walad*.' This inscription shows also resemblance to the Gez inscription, for neither of them has the addition '*καὶ Αἰθιόπων*,' so characteristic of the bilingual, and in both the Bega stand before the Kasu. In the phraseology of the inscription I find certain echos of the Gez inscription, of which I must here quote one, No. 4: 'and when I raised myself up, I sent to him ambassadors who should make known to him . . .' and similarly in No. 2: 'and when he had raised himself up he sent ambassadors to the King of . . . and of Kasu, in order to say to him (?) . . .'

The conclusion that this inscription dates between the bilingual and Gez inscriptions is proved by the name of a king, who, if I do not mistake in reading A in the first line, should be written

ደደደዐገዝ which I read Ela<sup>m</sup> Amida<sup>m</sup>. And we recall that the erector of the two Gez inscriptions calls himself Zana, son of Elâ Amida. So if this reading is correct, the erector of the inscription is the same Ela Amida who was the father of the erector of both the Gez inscriptions.

As far as the fragmentary condition of the inscription and the many doubtful words admit of an opinion, this monument describes a war against the Kasu, from which much booty was gained, after a bloody slaughter of the enemy.

*Translation of No. 2.*

1. [This inscription was erected] and established by Ela<sup>m</sup> Amida<sup>m</sup>. . . .
2. [King of Ak]sum<sup>m</sup> and of Homer<sup>m</sup> and of Raydan<sup>m</sup>
3. [and of Saba<sup>m</sup>] and of Salh[in]<sup>m</sup> and of Tiya<sup>m</sup> [and
4. of Bega and of] Kas<sup>m</sup>, King of Kings, son [of]
5. Mahrem, who is never tri]umphed over by his foes. After he had raised himself up, he sent
6. [ambassadors to the King of . . .] and of Kasu, when he spake (?) . . .
7. . . . and after they had come to their brave ones (?) . . .
8. . . . to their insinuations. . . .
9. . . . and after having put them in order, and sent them . . .
10. . . . he brought them here with their tribute, and . . .





11. . . . [and as they con]cealed (?) their camels  
with their . . .

12. . . . after he had ordered and sent them

13. . . . whilst they brought speaking and dumb  
(men and cattle)

14. they all (?) and then ordered them . . .

15. [after they had warr]ed upon their land,  
after they had come to them . . .

16. . . .

17. . . . and with them . . .

18. . . . and their youths to four . . .

19. . . . their camp, when they had come to  
them . . .

20. . . . their district and their neighbourhood  
(?) . . .

21. . . . when he had completed them and was  
come to them . . .

22. . . . when they had come to their walls and  
farms (?) . . .

23. . . . [and he brought] them to a condition  
of annihilation . . .

24. . . . he gave them their (?) riches and . . .

25. . . . their camels, and he ordered them (?)  
and sent . . .

26. . . . their . . . and their overthrow of the  
foes (?) . . .

27. . . . and with them their King, and he fled  
to them (?) . . .

28. . . . and with them their doorkeeper (?) . . .

29. . . . and . . .



*No. 3. Impression by Mr. Bent—Copies by Dr. E.  
Rüppell and others.*

In the year 1808 Mr. Salt discovered, in the rubbish heaps of Aksum in proximity to the celebrated Greek inscription, three large limestone tablets, each of which is 4 ft. 2 in. long, 1 ft. 8 in. wide, and 5 in. thick, and on which old Ethiopian inscriptions were engraved and remained more or less in a good state of preservation. These have been preserved in the house of a *deftera* at Aksum in his granary, where they have escaped wilful destruction.

Dr. Edward Rüppell copied the same in 1833, and sent copies to Europe; but all his exertions to get them translated by the celebrated European orientalists, Silvester de Sacy, J. T. Platt of London, and Herr Hoffmann in Jena, and by Abyssinian priests, failed. In the year 1838 Dr. Rüppell published the two best preserved in facsimile amongst the illustrations of his travels in Abyssinia. By the help of these copies Prof. Roedige succeeded in deciphering a portion of them, and published his results in the *Allgemeine Litteratur-Zeitung*. He gave a consecutive translation of the first, and explained several points of the second inscription, which was larger but worse preserved. A rather fantastic but in many respects correct translation was in the meantime made by an Abyssinian priest in Cairo, and Dr. Rüppell published in the second volume of his travels in Abyssinia both the translations from

his copy, and accompanied them by some remarks. A considerable advance was made in the deciphering of the inscriptions, especially the second one, in an article by A. Dillmann in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländische Gesellschaft*. (Vol. vii. 355 ff, 1853.)

With the exception of the Lazarist missionary Sapeto who has made a fanciful translation of the second inscription, and a professed copy of the same on the spot which he however never published, only M. Antoine d'Abbadie, of the many travellers who have visited Abyssinia, attempted a revised copy. In the year 1838 he copied them for the first time, and took a second copy in 1842 and revised this with the aid of a lettered Ethiopian five years later. The results of these researches he set forth in a paper in the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*. (Series iv. Tom. v. p. 14–30 and 186–201.) In consequence of this, Herr A. Dillmann in his treatise on the origin of the Aksumite kingdom<sup>1</sup> took the question up again and dealt with the two inscriptions on pages 210–226, and made a series of fortunate linguistic suggestions. He made the following appeal to European travellers: ‘Of all the numerous European travellers who year by year visit Abyssinia, not a single one has been found to help science so much as to take an impression of these important documents, and I cannot forbear to express an earnest wish that this may yet come to pass before the inscriptions are entirely obliterated; as well also

<sup>1</sup> *Abhandlungen des königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Berlin, 1878.

of other inscriptions which are yet visible and may be found by seeking and excavations, so that they may be more easily understood.'

Before I give the original text of the old Ethiopian inscriptions from the impressions brought back by Mr. Bent, I must remark that the reading of the first inscription and the translation of the same was furthered by the zealous endeavours of d'Abbadie. On the contrary, his copy of the second inscription is far behind Rüppell's in accuracy. D'Abbadie appears to have depended far more on his Abyssinian assistant, and far too little on his own eyes, when he says: 'the copy of the inscription made by Rüppell is so full of faults, that it was hardly any use to us in our attempt at translation.' This fact proves the uselessness of his copy, which Dillmann perceived with his fine critical tact.

It will easily be understood that many of Dillmann's hypotheses are satisfactorily verified by Mr. Bent's impressions; whilst others, on the contrary, are set aside. It was no light or mean service on his part to give us such a relatively good text from the copies of Rüppell and d'Abbadie.

### No. 3.

#### *Translation.*

1. . . . Zanâ, son of Ela-Amidâ, the man of
2. Halen, King of Aksum, and of Homêr
3. and of Raydan, and of Saba, and of Sal-
4. -hen and of Tsiyâmô and of Bejâ and of Kas



# Inscription at Aksum

Воескн, *Corpus inscript.* iii. 515.

1 ΑΕΙΖΑΝΑΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΑΣΩΜΙΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ  
 2 ΜΗΡΙΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΡΑΕΙΔΑΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΙΘ  
 3 ΟΠΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΑΒΑΕΙΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΣΙΛΕΗ

31. ΓΕΝ

No. 3. TEXT.

1. H ፍ | ወልደ | ለሰ | ዐጣደ | ብእነየ |
2. [ሐ]ሴን | ንኪሠ | ለክሱሠ | ወዘ | ሐጭር |
3. [ው]ዘ | ሩደደን | ወዘ | ሰበእ | ወዘ | ሰል
4. ሒን | ወዘ | ድቃዎ | ወዘ | ብጋ | ወዘ | ለሐ |
5. [ው]ልደ | ማሕሩሥ | ዘእደተመወለ | ለ
6. ፀር | ፀብኩ | ጸርኔ | ማንገሥተሠ | ለ
7. [ደ]ን | ሐቤ | ጎፋዐን | ወቀተል | ነጋደ
8. . | ወሌሥዝ | ፀበእናሉ | ወእሥቀደ |
9. ፈኔውኔ | ሰራዎተ | ሰርቄ | ማሐዘ | ወ
10. ሰርዌ | ደእን | ወሰርዌ | ሐራ | ወለሴ
11. ኔ | ተለውኔ | ወኅደርኔ | ሥግበእ | ማ
12. ረድ | ዑለሃ | ወእውፈርኔ | ሰራዊተ
13. ኔ | ወቀተልዎ | ወዪወውዎ | ወማህረ
14. ከዎ | ወቀተልኔ | ሰዕኔ | ወጸወንተ |
15. ወረሥ | ወዘሐተኔ | ለርበዕቱ | ለኔ
16. ጋደ | ወእኅዝኔ | ለቢተሃ | ሥክለ | ከ
17. ልኬ | ደቄ | ወግኔ | ቀተለ | ዕድ | ዘ[እደ]
18. ኔ | ፈየፒ | ወእንነተ | ፀየፀ | ወኮ | ንየፈ |
19. ዪዋ | ዕደ | ወእንሰተ | . . . | ገዐዝ | ዕ
20. ድ | ጣ | ወእንነት | ወደቄቅ | የፕረ | ወ
21. ኮኔ | ፀየፈ | ሥህርከ | ለህሥ | ፒግ | የህየ
22. ጣረ | ለኔነሰ | ዐውደ | ፐየጽ . . | ወተ
23. ማይጠ | ደኅኔ | ሥክለ | ከሐዛበ | [ከ]ደ[ኔ] |
24. ወተከለ | ማንበረ | በዝየ | በማደ | ወ
25. ከማሐፀንሥ | ለዐከተር | ወለበረ
26. ጽ | ወለሥድር | ወእማየ | ዘኔማተ | ወ
27. ኔቀሌ | ወእቱ | ወበሒረ | ወዘማደ | ለ
28. ደተኔቀል | ወደተኔማተ | ለብሒረ
29. ለደጣእ | ወ. . . . . ተተ | ለማሐ
30. ሩሥ | ዘወለደኔ | . . . ሥ . ለህሥ | የ

5. Son of Mahrem (Mars), who is not triumphed over by

6. his foes. They advanced against the destroyer of their kingdom, A-

7. -[da]n, at the time of the overpowering and murder of [our] merchants.

8. So we took the field against him, and from Mekadâ

9. we sent the troops, the troop Mahaza and

10. the troop Dakan, and the troop Harâ, and we

11. ourselves followed after, and encamped at the gathering place of the warrior

12. host in Alâ, and we sent out our army,

13. and they killed him (the enemy), made prisoners and boo-

14. -ty, and we slaughtered down Sanî and Tsawantô

15. and Gêmâ, and Zahtan, four nations,

16. and we took prisoners, Alita, with both his

17. sons. And the number of the slaughtered men of A[dan] amounted to

18. 503, and the women 202, total 705

19. Prisoners of men and women of the camp followers, men

20. 40, and women and children 165, to-

21. -tal 205. Booty of oxen 31,900 and

22. 47, and small cattle about 80,000. And he

23. returned back safe with the people of [A]da[n],

24. and raised up the throne here in Sadâ and

25. placed it under the protection of Astar and of Barra-

26. -ts and of the Earth. And if anyone destroys it and

27. roots it up, so shall he and his country and his race be

28. rooted up and destroyed from out of his country

29. Let him offer . . . to Mah

30. -rem who has begotten me . . . bulls 100.

*Remarks on the Above.*

It is not by chance that in these inscriptions the names of the Abyssinian king and of his opponent are obliterated. The king who sought to perpetuate his fame in future ages, has been worked against from the enemy's side. In the lapse of time a successor of the enemy came to the throne of Aksum, who wished to obliterate the name of his vanquished ancestor as well as that of the victor. He did not dare to take out the whole name for fear of a curse which might fall upon the destroyer, so he changed the name to Tazena, a name which appears on the list of Ethiopian kings. Originally, as far as I can read, stood Zana and not Zena, and this name is clearly that of the victorious king. We are more fortunate with the name of his opponent, for it appears three times on the stone; in each place it is mutilated, but by comparing all the three places we can easily put together the name of *Adan*.

The title of the king on this tablet differs from



the title of the king on the Greek inscription and its Ethiopian reverse (No. 1) in two points. Firstly, in the addition of the words 'man of Halen.' In view of the Greek influence which reigned in Aksum, and in remembrance of the remark of the Periplus about king Zoskalis, καὶ γραμμάτων Ἑλληνικῶν ἔμπειρος, it has been attempted to translate the Ethiopian phrase Be 'sja Halen as φιλέλλην, but already Dillmann has rightly spoken against this rendering. According to my idea the term applies to the representative of a nome or race. 'The man of Halen' means of the race or nome of Halen. The second difference is in the absence of the words 'Waza Habaset,' translated into Greek on the bilingual inscription as καὶ Αἰθιόπων. The leaving out of this term is very remarkable, for this term, occurring as it does in the Inscriptions 1 and 2, proves that the opinion that the Abyssinians did not know the word, but were called Habaset only by the Arabians, is incorrect.

The theatre of the campaign alluded to in this inscription appears, as d'Abbadie supposes it to be, the province of Adiabo, where a place called Mikada now exists. The reading Em-mekada is certain, and Em-kedma is quite excluded. The determination of the locality of the battle rests only on this inscription, and cannot, as d'Abbadie makes out, be placed by the second inscription. After having sent the troops forward from Mekada, the king followed himself, and camped at the gathering place of the troops in Ala (not Ulaha); curious as the word sounds, *angad* can only be translated 'race.'

By Sada (line 24) is probably meant the long line of pedestals, which are found close to the spot where the inscription came from, and which were set up as monuments by the kings, forming a kind of field of Mars.

This throne or monument and the inscription were placed under the protection of the gods. As it was the custom to place the Sabæan inscriptions under the protection of three gods, Athar, Wadd, and Nakrah, so also this monument was placed under the protection of three gods, at the head of whom is *Astar*, a male god, as he is also in Sabæan. Of the other two gods, one is *Medr*, an earth god, and the other is, curiously enough, the god *Barrats* (*tonitrans, micans*), about whom we shall have more to say in the remarks on the next inscription.

No. 4. *Impression by Mr. Bent. Copies by Herr Ruppell and M. d'Abbadie.*

Of this inscription, as I have already said, there is a translation by Sapeto which proves itself to be a simple phantasy of the speculative Lazarist missionary. The most glaring instance is the translation of the first line, which according to Sapeto is, 'By the power of God, who spreads out the sky and the earth, God in eternity who has made Tazena king.' Also d'Abbadie has found in the first line (in which Ruppell only believed he could recognise two letters), ' . . . l king of Aksum and of Hamâ . . . Saba' . n.'

In reality there is in this supposed first line, as one can convince oneself absolutely by Mr. Bent's

squeeze, nothing at all, only some crookednesses and flaws in the stone, which with some fancy can be looked upon as letters, but are really nothing. The inscription, therefore, consisted of fifty-one and not fifty-two lines, but to avoid confusion I have retained the old reckoning. There may, however, have been two more lines, for the inscription begins with the name of the king, like No. 1, and like the bilingual of Aksum (Salt-Bent). I cannot here undertake an analysis of the text, and a close examination into the reading of d'Abbadie, but hope to do so on a future occasion.

That I have appreciated the excellent work of Dillmann, and what is of value in d'Abbadie's copy, need not be said. I think, however, out of Mr. Bent's impression, after repeated and careful trial, I have been able to read much which neither Rüppell nor d'Abbadie and his interpreter could read, and to decipher a great deal of the rest more clearly and with greater understanding.

#### No. 4.

##### *Translation.*

1. Irregularities in the stone.
2. . . . Nâ, son of Ela-amidâ, man of Halen, king of Aksum, and of Homê-
3. -r and of Raydân, and of Saba, and of Salhên, and of Tseyâmô, and of Begâ, and
4. of] Kasu. King of kings, son of Ela-Amidâ, who is never triumphed over by his foes.

21. ጽፎፋወ | ውስተ | ፋለገ | ኪዳ | ወብተ | ዘኞተ | በወስተ | ጻይ | ዘ[ሊእ]
22. እ] መረ | ጸልቀ | ወእኔዘ | እሐጻሪሆው | ያሰጠው | እኔዘ | መለእ | ሰፈ
23. ን | ወስተ | እኔዘተ | ወዕድ | ወዚወው | መገብተ | ክልእተ | ሰበ | ያ
24. መጽሉ | እደኔተ | እኔዘ | ደጸዐኑ | እርበዕተ | ወእኔ ጻህው |
25. [ደ]ኪከ | ዐ | ቡተሌ | ዐ | ወእንጢና | ወ | ዘሐኔ | ዐ | ወእለ | ሞተ | መገብተ
26. ደኘከ | ዐ | ደገሌ | ዐ | እዛከ | ዐ | ሐዊረ | ዐ | ከርከር | ዐ | መፊሆው | [ዐ | . .

27. አል | ወከለበወ | ቀደደ | ብረር | ወሐቀተ | ወርቅ | ነኝ | ማጎብተ | ስለ |
28. ሞቱ | ረ | ወግረ | ዐ | ወበጸሐኩ | ከኩ | ስነ | ስቀተሎ | ወሰደ[ሥቆው | በ]
29. ማጎበርተ | ስፍላገ | ዘከደ | ወተከሲ | ወበከኝተ | በጸሐኩ [ፋኝው]
30. [ኩ] | ማረደ | አርፎ | ማሐዛ | ወአርፎ | ሐረ | ወደመወ | ወፋለሐ | ወጸረኝ |
31. ማለዕልተ | ሲደ | ስህኝረ | ኝደቀ | ወዘ | ሐሠር | ስነግተ | ስህጉፊጸ |
32. [ዘ] ኝደቀ | ስልወ | ዐ | ደር | ዐ | ወቀተሌ | ወዲወወ | ወስጽደፋ | ወነተ |
33. ግደ | ወደኝኝ | ስተዉ | ስፍረሆው | ፀርው | ወመዋሰው | በኝደለ | ስገ
34. ሲለብሔር | ወሰሥ፤ጸ | ፋኝሁኩ | አረፎ | ሐልኝ | ወአርፎ | ደከኝ | ወ
35. አርፎ | ስበረተ | ወፋለሐ | ወጸረኝ | ማተሐተ | ሲደ | ስህኝረ | ኖባ | ዞ

5. [In the strength of the Lord] of the heavens, who has bestowed the lordship over the people, to the son

6. of Mahrem who is never triumphed over by his foes. Before me shall no enemy stand, and . . .

7. . . . no enemy. In the strength of the Lord of the world, I led the war against the Nuba, when [they practised

8. violence] the people of Nuba, when they boasted and did not cross the Takaze river. . . . The people

9. of Nuba . . . in that they did violence to the peoples [under my protection] and . . . and . . . hewed down

10. with axes, and ravaged for the second time, and third time the . . .

11. . . . killed his frontier neighbour. And when I arose and sent ambassadors to him

12. in order to point out to him that they robbed and plundered my possessions, and lay in wait

13. and shed [blood and] when he heeded not our embassy, and delayed to depart and return

14. and to withdraw himself, then I took the field against him, and arose in the strength of the Lord of the world,

15. and I smote them at the Takaze beyond Kamalkê. And then when they

16. withdrew themselves to a distance, then followed I [during] three and twenty days, during which I

17. smote him, and took from him prisoners and

booty, and took away from where the prisoners dwelt

18. booty, and during which my people returned who had gone to the war, and during which I burnt their towns

19. of mason work and of straw, and they plundered his crops and his iron and his ore and his cop-

20. -per, and destroyed the pictures (or statues) in his temple, and the provisions of heaped up corn, and threw

21. them into the river Seda, and many were drowned in the water, who did not under-

22. -stand how to swim (?) because their boats sank being full of a quantity

23. of men and women. And they made prisoners leaders of the same, as

24. they came on as spies, as they rode, four, and their names are

25. Teséka 1, Butalê 1, Engabênâ 1, Zahan 1, and the leaders who perished were

26. Tenak 1, Dagalê 1, Azak 1, Hawîrê 1, Karkâr; their priest (or seer) . . .

27. sal; and they took from him [as booty] a chain of silver and a casket of gold. There were of leaders

28. who perished five, and one priest, and I reached to the Kasu and smote them and annihilated them

29. at the confluence of the rivers Seda and Takaze. And the day after I had arrived I sent out

30. a marauding party, the troop Mabaza and

the troop Harâ, and they shed blood, and they . . .  
and they laid waste

31. up the Seda the towns of masonry and of  
straw ; the names of the towns

32. of masonry, Alva 1, Darô 1, and they killed  
and took prisoner and threw into the

33. water, and came in good condition back,  
after they had terrified and conquered their enemy  
in the strength

34. of the Lord of the world, and thereupon I  
sent the troop Halen and the troop Dakân and

35. the troop Sabarât, and they plundered and  
laid waste down the Seda the Nuba towns of

36. straw (houses) four, Nagûsô 1. Towns of  
masonry of the Kasu and Noba, Naszato 1. D. v

37 -r tâli 1, and reached as far as the district of  
the red Nôbâ, and in good condition returned

38. my people back after that they had made  
prisoners, killed and taken booty in the strength of  
the Lord of hea-

39. -ven. And I set up my throne within the  
confluence of the river Seda and

40. Takaze, in sight of the town of masonry . . .  
the island, which the Lord of heaven has

41. given me. Captive men 241, captive women  
415, total 629

42. Killed were men 702, killed women and chil-  
dren 156, total 800 and

43. 58. Total of the killed and imprisoned 1,487,  
and the booty of oxen 5 . . .

44. and fifty and of sheep 50, 150, and I



set up my throne here at the Seda through the strength

45. of the Lord of heaven, who has helped me and given me my kingdom, and the

46. Lord of heaven strengthened my kingdom, and as He has conquered for me to-day may he henceforth

47. for me conquer wherever I may go as he to-day has conquered for me, and I will thank him

48. Barrats by justice and by right in that I will not oppress the people, and I place in the protection

49. of the Lord of heaven, who has made me king and of the earth which upholds it, this throne

50. which I have erected. If any one seeks to tear it out or overthrow it, so shall he and his family

51. be torn out and be overthrown, and from his place shall he be uprooted. And

52. I have set up this throne in the strength of the Lord of heaven.

### *Remarks on the Inscription.*

Also in this inscription the name of the king, who set it up, is mutilated; there is, however, no doubt that it was the same king who set up the last inscription.

It has been thought that there are traces of a monotheistic belief, and even of biblical phraseology, in the altered turn of this inscription, particularly in the appearance of *Egzia Samag* and *Egzia bher*, Lord of heaven and Lord of the world. But this supposition is unmercifully overthrown by the reading of

lines 47-49, which have been hitherto undeciphered : 'and I thank him *Barrats*, by justice and right, in that I will not oppress the people, and this throne which I have erected I place in the protection of the Lord of heaven, and the earth deity.' Thus the biblical sounding phrases cannot do away with the fact that here, as in the last inscription (lines 25 and 26), three deities appear, of whom two, *Barrats* (tonitrans, micans) and *Medr*, appear in both inscriptions, only in this one, in place of Astar, stands *Egzia Samag*, Lord of the heavens.

In addition to this my completion of lines 5 and 6, 'son of the unconquered Mahram (Ares, Mars)' is practically certain. We must therefore set aside, first of all, all previous conclusions as to the nature of the king's religious views, which are supplied to us by the now filled up phrase. It appears that the god Astar was worshipped in Paho as heaven, and had the epithet 'Lord of heaven,' under which he appears in this inscription, and the phrase 'by justice and by right' can easily be found in Assyrian, Babylonian, and other old Semitic inscriptions of heathen times. There is, therefore, certainly no trace of Monotheism, Judaism, or Christianity to be found in this inscription.

Another weighty point to be fixed is the seat of the war mentioned in this inscription. Though *Makeda*, which lies in *Adiabo*, is mentioned in the last inscription, I do not think it is a reason for placing the scene of the campaign there. In this I follow the views of *Dillmann*, who places it between

the *Atbara* (Takazze) and the *Sêda* (Nile). The war is carried on against the people of Nuba, who advanced as far as the upper Atbara, and overran territory belonging to the kingdom of Aksum (line 8). They repeated their daring assaults a second and a third time, and an embassy was sent to the leader of Nuba, whose name is mutilated (line 10), which failed ; so the king took the field and pursued the enemy twenty-three days on the other side of the Takazze to the Seda river, where many foes were drowned. He then advanced against the Kasu, and gained a victory at the confluence of the two rivers, in the neighbourhood of the present *Damer*. Up the Seda he sent out marauding parties, and amongst others the towns of Aloa and Daro were overthrown. In the first, Dillmann has recognised the town which gave its name to the monophysist kingdom of Aloa, with its capital Saba. Daro he identifies with the Daron of Ptol. iv. 7, 20, and the Diaron of Pliny vi. 191. By other parties down the Saba, the towns of the Nuba and Kasu were also overthrown, amongst others Nagusô, Nazzâto, and . . . Stati, and then they reached the district of the red Nuba. A throne was raised up at the confluence of the Seda and Takazze as a sign of lordship. After the counting of the booty, follows the customary concluding formula.

PART III—*On the Script and Language of the  
Inscriptions.*

Inscriptions in three different kinds of script and language have now been found in Abyssinia:—

1. Those from Yeha, which represent the oldest form of Sabæan script, and belong, according to the letters as well as by the Boustrophedon form of writing, to the oldest period of Sabæan history, namely, the *mukrab* period.

2. Two of the inscriptions from Aksum, Nos. 1 and 2, are written in the old Semitic way from right to left, and in an alphabet belonging to the latest period of Sabæan history.

3. Nos. 3 and 4 are written from left to right in an alphabet with vowel points closely resembling later Ethiopian.

As the oldest Ethiopian manuscripts are nearly 800 years later than Nos. 3 and 4, which up to this date were the only Ethiopian texts preserved from ancient times, and even now are the oldest extant specimens of writing with the inherent vowels, it can easily be judged of the intrinsic value of these discoveries. The value of these texts was greatly lessened by the faulty copies, and it was impossible to reach any certain conclusion therefrom on account of the hesitating use of the vowel points. But now that we are able to complete an authentic text of the inscriptions from the impressions brought back by Mr. Theodore Bent, we are in a position to say with certainty that the inherent vowel system and its written

equivalent is formed in exactly the same way as it is in the oldest manuscript. Hence the monuments of the kings of Aksum now for the first time rise to their peculiar importance in respect to the history of script and language, and a claim may now be set up from these inscriptions to form a conception of the old Ethiopian language when the Aksumite kingdom was at the height of its prosperity.

The inscriptions from Yeha, as well as Nos. 1 and 2 from Aksum, place us in a position to observe the early development of the Ethiopian language before the reform in writing and the introduction of the inherent vowels.

First, therefore, let us examine Nos. 1 and 2 from Aksum, in which the inherent vowels are not found, and discover the medium by which this peculiar formation has been reached.

It has already been shown<sup>1</sup> that the old Ethiopian tongue obtained its origin from a pure Semitic source, brought by immigrants into Abyssinia from South Arabia. The difference which existed between the Sabæan and North Arabian dialects and the Ethiopian with its inherent vowels made it difficult to clearly establish the genealogical relation of the Ethiopian to the dialects of North and South Arabia. For example the lack in Ethiopian of the article, which is formed differently in different Semitic languages, and therefore cannot have originated in any common Semitic antiquity, has been looked upon as a sign of its greater age. Again, from palæographic grounds

<sup>1</sup> A. Dillmann, *Grammatik der äthiopischen Sprache*, S. 2.

there are a few signs in the Ethiopian alphabet which appear to approach more nearly to the Phœnician than to the corresponding Sabæan, so that some writers have been inclined to place the emigration of the Southern Arabians into Abyssinia at a time when the Sabæan script and writing as it is known on the earliest monuments was not yet formed.

The two inscriptions (Nos. 1 and 2) from Aksum put an end to this hypothesis, and since old Sabæan inscriptions have been found at Yeha, which certainly belong to the oldest epoch of Sabæan writing, there can be no doubt about the early wanderings of Sabæan merchants into Abyssinia, for in these fragments from Yeha the script is always formed just in the way it is found on Sabæan monuments in Southern Arabia.

The Ethiopian is, as is well known, written from left to right, and the vowels are expressed by slight alterations in the consonants. As it has already been pointed out, Nos. 3 and 4 show the same construction and shape as the later Ethiopian, but Nos. 1 and 2, on the contrary, are still written entirely in the Sabæan consonant writing without inherent vowels and from right to left. An examination of the forms of the letters of 1 and 2, and a comparison of the same with the Himyaritic inscriptions of the same period, leave no doubt that the Ethiopian script, before its reformation and the introduction of inherent vowels, had remained in continual contact with Sabæan and had not branched off into an independent line. The characteristic signs of the letters *m*, *s*, and *w*, from

which one can always decide the age and character of a Sabæan inscription, show the same form in Nos. 1 and 2 as they do in the latest inscriptions from Southern Arabia, and also show the same worn-out and irregular characters that we get in the latest epoch.

The remarkable fact must now be noticed that at the reformation of the Ethiopian script an older form of the Sabæan alphabet, probably from old documents in the State archives of Aksum, was adopted, and from this we may conclude that the Ethiopian writing descends from the Sabæan as it is preserved for us in the inscriptions. Though the Ethiopian alphabet has fewer signs than the Sabæan, we must not imagine that the Sabæan only took these signs after its separation from the Ethiopian, but rather that these signs were present in old Ethiopian, but have got lost in the lapse of time. It is known that the following five Sabæan signs are missing in the Ethiopian alphabet : **Ⲫ**, **Ⲇ**, **Ⲭ**, **Ⲱ**, **Ⲳ**, and the supposition that these signs were only introduced into Sabæan after its separation from Ethiopian is set aside, quite independently of other reasons, by the fact that three of these signs appear in the inscriptions 1 and 2, and there can be no doubt that the other two signs also existed in the early Ethiopian alphabet.

At the reformation of the language these five signs were left out. The question is, why was this done? The loss of the four sibilants, *z*, *th*, *ś*, and *ç*, which the Ethiopian alphabet suffered at this time, must naturally be put down to popular grounds.

At the reformation of the writing and the introduction of the inherent vowels, care must of course have been taken to set aside all superfluous sounds, because each sign with its inherent vowels would offer seven different variants, but all signs which were absolutely necessary to represent certain sounds were certainly not thrown out. Even prior to the reformation of the language certain sounds in pronunciation, and consequently in writing, were in the process of change. In fact, in both inscriptions, especially in the bilingual (No. 1), there is great uncertainty in the use of the sibilants: for example, **Ⲫ** and **Ⲭ** are changed with one another; **Ⲅ** is constantly written like the Ethiopian **ሐ**, and where **Ⲅ** appears in some places it does not stand for the sound *th*, but for *z*. The signs **Ⲭ** and **ሐ** are changed for each other in Sabæan, so it is not to be wondered at that when the language was reformed both of them were omitted. The signs **Ⲡ** and **ሐ** appear even before the reformation of writing to have been omitted, on account of the loss of the corresponding sounds.

Having now discussed the sound and writing of both the earliest inscriptions of Aksum, we must study the character of the language with respect to formation and syntax. A first glance at the bilingual inscription would lead us to imagine that we had a pure Sabæan text before us, for it can immediately be perceived that the appellatives and proper names all terminate with a *mimation* (i.e. terminal *m*). By degrees, however, distinct Ethiopian roots and formations appear, but mixed with Sabæan words and ter-



minations, so that one might imagine that a Sabæan writer who did not quite understand Ethiopian had composed them. A closer examination, however, reveals the fact that they are in an Ethiopian dialect composed of older forms and turns of sentences, which probably at the time of the composition of the inscription (i.e. about the middle of the fourth century A.D.) had fallen into disuse, but had certainly been used in former times. It is first, therefore, best to consider the distinct Ethiopian elements, and then to examine the apparently foreign parts, whether they belong distinctly to Ethiopian, or have been introduced from outside.

As regards sound, the Ethiopian character of the language is betokened by the absence of both sound and sign for  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$ ; furthermore, by the variable-ness in the pronunciation of  $\text{,}$  and further in the sounds *s*, *ś*, and *th*, and also we may remark the interchanging of  $\text{8}$  with  $\text{H}$  in the words *mesla*, 'with'; *sedest*, 'six'; *anest*, 'a woman'; and other peculiarities will be alluded to elsewhere. Real Ethiopian words and forms are these:—*negûs*, 'king,' pl. *nagâst*; *dakîk*, 'children'; *anest*, 'woman'; *lahm*, 'cattle'; *bher*, 'land'; *dewawa*, 'to lead into exile'; *tamawa'a*, 'to be conquered'; *mesla*, 'with'; *enda*, 'when'; *wêda*, 'where'; *tanaša'a*, 'to raise themselves up'; *fanawa*, 'to send'; *dawal*, 'district'; *daga*, 'present'; *sabaht*, 'tribute'; *basaha*, 'reached.'

Quite a remarkable peculiarity which distinguishes the Ethiopian from the old Semitic languages is the use of an infinitive absolute to express an accessory

sentence. These are found repeatedly in both inscriptions.

A further Ethiopian peculiarity is in the expression of the numbers 3 to 10, not by consonants but by apposition. The only case which we have occurs in No. 1, line 4, 'six kings,' where this peculiarity occurs.

The apparently irregular suffix form of the third person plural, sometimes *om* and sometimes *hom*, is explained by the fact that the plural in Ethiopian has a conjunctive vowel in it after which the *h* is not elided.

In the causative *h* sometimes appears, sometimes *a* as a prefix, which shows that the composer sometimes writes in the popular speech and sometimes in the ancient.

After having thus firmly established the character of the speech as Ethiopian upon the grounds of sound form and syntax, we must now examine the forms of speech which appear to be foreign.

The most peculiar characteristic which these inscriptions present is the existence of the *mimation*: hitherto only rare and uncertain instances of this have been found in Ethiopian. Not only proper names, but also appellatives, have the terminal *m*, but the rules in use in Sabæan for the mimation are not observed here. They write *Raydan<sup>m</sup>*; *wa Habaset<sup>m</sup>*; *wa Saba<sup>m</sup>*, contrary to the Sabæan custom, where the form *Saba<sup>m</sup>* never occurs, no more does *Raydan<sup>m</sup>*, so it is absolutely impossible that a native of Southern Arabia can have written these inscriptions. It would

therefore appear that the mimation was no longer actually in use, but is rather a relic of ancient times, retained in official documents, and has here been used as it would not have been in the living language. Also the existence of the dual in the bilingual inscription need not be looked upon as imported, for there are traces of its existence in later Ethiopian.

Another survival of ancient times is to be found in the word *malek*, for *nagûs*, in No. 1, and *malek malakan* for *negus nagust*, 'king of kings'; and the termination *an* is also to be remarked, which also occurs in No. 2, line 4, and with the mimation following it in a curiously irregular manner. The word *bin*, 'a son,' instead of *walad* in No. 1 is also a survival.

It is certainly not to be considered that inscriptions 1 and 2 exactly represent the speech of Aksum at the time of Aizanes, for even violent measures could not have rooted out all traces of the older speech in the relatively short time between the reign of Aizanes and [Ta] Zana, son of Ela-Amida. Nor need we be surprised that Sabæan shapes of letters and forms of sentences taken from antique models disappeared after the reformation of the writing; for between the antique models and the popular speech a great breach had sprung up, so that the reformer had little trouble in casting them aside.

The inscriptions are by no means of less value because they do not contain the popular speech of Aksum in the fourth century after Christ, but present to us older characters and forms. They are

on the contrary more valuable because they reveal to us a still older period of Ethiopian speech. It is indifferent to us whether the mimation and the terminal *an* were used in Aksum in the fourth century or two centuries earlier: that at one time they were in common use in Ethiopian, since the discovery of these inscriptions there is no longer any doubt. We can now no longer look upon the lack of the article in Ethiopian as a sign of the antiquity of this language, for it was once in use, as in the Sabæan; but it was lost. The same has been the case with the mimation and many other points, which are found in Sabæan, but were lost in Ethiopian.

From this treatise that I have made on the development of this script, the relative sounds and the formation of the letters, we can definitely conclude that the Ethiopian comes out of the Sabæan, but that on a foreign ground, and under foreign influence, it has been considerably altered, and this influence continued to work until the old Ethiopian became the modern Amharic, the tongue of the modern Abyssinians, the syntax of which bears a closer resemblance to the Hamite languages than the Sabæan.

During the reign of [Ta] Zana, son of Ela-Amida, there was probably present at Aksum an educated Greek, who influenced the reform of the writing. Up to this time they wrote, like the other Semitic people, with the exception of the Babylonians and the Assyrians, from left to right; following the example of the Greeks, the right to left system was

introduced. The figures also on the Aksumite inscriptions are expressed by consonants; but the chief feature of the reform was in the introduction of the inherent vowels, and it is extremely strange that they did not attempt to introduce vowel letters as in Greek, and to establish a syllable system instead of the inherent vowels; but in spite of the Greek influence the fixity in the Semitic language of the consonants and the living element was too strong to be changed, and in no Semitic script has an equal value been given to vowels and consonants, and Ethiopian is only a variant of the other Semitic script, like Arabic and Hebrew, where the vowels appear like a flying column sometimes above, sometimes below, and sometimes in the middle of the troop of consonants. In Ethiopian the vowels are betokened by strokes, dots, or rings attached firmly to the consonants, perhaps the result of some old Hamite form of syllable writing of which we have no traces left.

It certainly is a remarkable fact that the reformer of the writing did not take as the basis of his alphabet that existing in the monuments at Aksum, but an older Sabæan alphabet; but it is not to be wondered at, for as a rule in such reforms older patterns of caligraphy are produced which must have existed in the archives of Aksum. It is self-evident that the reformer would omit those signs which had no longer any adequate sound in the language, and this accounts for the omission of the five letters already referred to.

To add the strokes, dots and rings, which constituted the vowels, the reformer has in some cases slightly altered the shape of the letters. Herr Dillmann has most ably described the way in which the vowels were expressed; only in the betokening of the vowel *e* the impressions of Nos. 3 and 4 show that his statement was slightly incorrect.

There is no doubt that the reformation of the writing was a simultaneous work and done at one time. Nos. 3 and 4 show, in the impressions brought back by Mr. Theodore Bent, exactly the same system of inherent vowels which obtains in the earliest Ethiopian MSS. Hence the theory that the system of inherent vowels was only partially introduced in the Gez inscriptions, and varied from the later system, is overthrown by the impressions before us. In conclusion, I may remark that, independently of the fact that the right to left system of writing is introduced, the introduction of Greek figures to express numbers may be taken as an additional proof of the Greek influence in the reform.

As regards the language of the Gez inscriptions (Nos. 3 and 4), we find the same characteristics which we get in the MSS. of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. We are accustomed to remark a greater conservatism in the Semitic than in the Indo-Germanic tongues; centuries appear to roll over a widely spread Semitic language without causing any structural change in the formation of it. The reasons for this we cannot discuss here, but the fact

is certain. In spite of this fact, it cannot but be remarkable that the Ethiopian of both these Gez inscriptions is in the main exactly the same as the language used a thousand years later; but as a church language Ethiopian was securely fixed and cared for, and hence the old forms and expressions were maintained.

There are, however, as it befalls everything in this world, changes to be remarked, and the Sabæan influence exercised its power surely but slowly on the Hamite-Abyssinian people. The changes which the later Ethiopian shows in contrast to the two Gez inscriptions of Aksum, I will here shortly touch upon, for in doing so we shall best illustrate the old speech of Aksum.

1. The strong Semitic roots did not get driven out by the monosyllabic Hamite, but they on the contrary drove out the weaker Hamite roots; but at the same time they could not remain free from the influence of the Hamite vocal organs, and hence were developed the *u* possessing throat and palate sounds, which we do not get elsewhere in the Semitic languages. Our inscriptions show no trace of this *u* sound, and hence the opinion is forced upon us that at the time of the introduction of the vowel writing they were not yet definitely formed, and only in course of time came into definite use, and were expressed in writing.

2. In the further development of the Ethiopian alphabet two signs for the *p* sound were introduced, but they are only to be found in foreign words. Also

there are no traces of these signs in our Aksumite inscriptions.

3. The contact with the Hamite-Abyssinian language appears to have been especially destructive to the Sabæan sibilants; for not less than four letters are thrown out in the new alphabet, and indeed the destroying influence seems to have been at work in the remaining kindred sounds. In our old inscriptions the signs and also the sounds are kept distinct.

4. Also the old *h* sounds (*ḥ* and *ḥ*) are distinctly separated from each other, whereas in later texts confusion frequently occurs. That this *h* was with difficulty pronounced by the Hamite organs of speech is best proved by the fact that the Semitic *ḥ* is represented by *k*.

5. In the later Ethiopian, the aspirates have had various influences upon the vowels. In the first place, there is a rule by which an aspirate causes the vowel preceding it to be drawled, as if it had given its breath to the vowel, and in so doing had become weakened itself. Of the twenty-six cases which occur in these inscriptions, only three can be definitely stated to be dealt with according to this rule, for the aspirants were anciently more firm, and were not weakened by lengthening the sound of the vowels.

6. Where the aspirate has another vowel such as *ā*, *ā*, in an immediately preceding open syllable, it is corrupted into *ē*; in the few cases of this kind which occur in our inscriptions (*rahik*, *lāik*, *āwāi*) *a* has not been corrupted into *e*.



7. Roots with aspirates as the 3rd radical in all instances where their 2nd radical is an open syllable with an *a* sound, change this *a* into *e*. In the two cases in our inscriptions (*Ardāmi* and *falaha*) this change does not take place.

The Ethiopian language appears to have been more influenced in respect of syntax than in sound and formation by the Hamite, and a study of the syntax of Amharic, where every Semitic phrase is exactly inverted, would lead one to believe that this reversing process had begun very early, and that the Hamite element had been instrumental in bringing this about.

The Hamite-Abyssinian tongue naturally assimilated rapidly the language of the Sabæans with its superior culture, and the compact Semite roots drove out in many instances the weaker Hamite ones; but the manner of thinking of the Hamite inhabitants did not so easily change. To be sure the Semitic syntax is still dominant in Ethiopia, but many traces of a foreign influence may be pointed out, and a great many variations and much decay in the formation can be explained by a contact with a foreign syntax.

The existence in old Ethiopian of the article and the mimation has been proved by a study of our two oldest inscriptions from Aksum; the abandonment of both can only have followed on the introduction of the Hamite dialect, which has neither article nor sign of indetermination, and like Ethiopian only has demonstrative pronouns.

The loss of the dual, which exists in Sabæan and North Arabian, and of which traces are yet to be found in the diminutives, and of the elative, of which in Sabæan there are countless examples in the sense of intensive adjective, is easily explained by the absence of this form in Hamite. The same is the case with respect to *numerus et genus*, which in Ethiopian is by no means so sharply observed as it is in other Semitic languages. Also the use of the infinitive absolute and the addition of enclitics are to be referred to Hamite-Abyssinian influence.

A searching examination into these inscriptions will undoubtedly produce further important results.

## APPENDIX

*ON THE MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERS OF THE  
ABYSSINIANS*

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It is with much pleasure that I submit the following account of the morphological characters of the Abyssinians, compiled from observations Mr. Bent has made during his recent expedition to Abyssinia. These observations are of much interest to me from two points of view. First, because I am not aware of there being in existence any similar observations on a series of the inhabitants of that part of Africa; consequently we learn, for the first time, from a number of *individual* records what their characters are, and what variations they present.

*Descriptive Characters*

The number of natives examined was 46; of these 22 belonged to the Tigré tribe, 12 to the Amhara tribe, 6 to the Galla tribe, 4 to the Hamasen tribe, 1 to the Barea, and 1 to the Bogos tribes respectively.

The observations were made upon men two-thirds of whom were between the ages of 25 and 30 years, the extreme limits being 20 and 40 years respectively.

In general condition of body, the subjects of observation were of medium development, rather more inclined to be

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Garson will publish a fuller account, and tables of measurements, in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute.

thin than stout, only one being entered as stout, while about a quarter of the whole number were decidedly thin.

*Colour of Skin.*—In the Tigré tribe the colour of the skin is with two exceptions of a rich chocolate-brown. In one of the exceptional cases the skin is darker, being of a sooty-black colour, in the other it is lighter, being of a dark yellow-brown or dark olive tint. The skin of the Hamasens is of the same rich brown chocolate colour as the Tigré tribe. Among the Amhara tribe only one case occurs of the lighter hue, that is of the dark yellow or olive colour; all the other members of that tribe examined are of the chocolate colour. The Bogos is of the yellow-brown colour. The Gallas are darker in colour, one being entered as absolutely black, the others sooty-black, and only one is chocolate coloured. The Barea is of the sooty colour. Thus three-quarters, or twenty-two of the whole number examined, were of a chocolate colour, seven were of a darker shade—more or less black—while three were of a lighter shade, namely, dark olive or dark yellow-brown colour.

*Colour of Eyes.*—The colour of the iris is entered in every case as dark. The term 'dark' includes black, brown, and dark hazel-coloured eyes.

*The Eyelids.*—The presence of a frænum or vertical band extending from the upper eyelid which covers the caruncle or fleshy-looking projection observable at the inner angle of our own eyes, is a well-known character of the Mongolian race, in whom we have it in its most exaggerated form. In other races the frænum varies in size, and in the extent to which it encroaches upon the inner angle of the eye till we find it entirely absent in most Europeans, and the caruncle is entirely exposed.

In the Abyssinians examined by Mr. Bent, the frænum is absent in twenty-three cases, and a vestige of it remains in the other twenty-three cases. Its presence and absence does not appear to be special to any particular tribe.

*Colour of Hair.*—The hair is entered as uniformly 'black' throughout all the persons examined.

*Character of Hair.*—The nature of the hair is also uniform, being 'curly' in all cases except one, where it is entered as 'woolly.' In another case it was between 'wavy' and 'curly,' not quite so curly as in the others.

*Amount of Hair on the Body.*—The amount of hair on the face and other parts of the body excluding the calvaria was found to be for the most part scanty, and in some cases absent; in one case it is noted as abundant on the face; in nine cases it was of medium amount on the face; and in five of these it was also medium in amount on the body.

*Shape of Face.*—The form of the face shows considerable diversity. In nineteen cases it is of medium proportions as regards breadth to length, neither particularly long nor particularly short. In ten cases it was found to be long and narrow; in six cases short and broad; in ten cases it is wedge-shaped in a downward direction; and in one case it was pyramidal, or narrowing upwards. The variations of the form of face run equally through each of the tribes of which we have a dozen records and upwards.

*Profile of Nose.*—The outline of the nose as seen in profile is very uniformly straight; but in four cases it is concave; and in two cases there is a tendency to the aquiline form, so that they have been entered in the records as being between the straight and the aquiline.

*Prognathism.*—The form of prognathism of most importance in describing race characters is that in which the prominence or forward projection of the face is situated in the region of the mouth. In fourteen cases prominence in this region is entirely absent; in the majority of cases there is slight prognathism; and in two cases it is more marked. No difference is observable in respect to this character in the different tribes except the Gallas, who are rather more prognathous than the others.

*Lips.*—In only two cases were the lips noticed as 'thin'; in twenty-four cases they are of medium thickness; in one case between 'thin' and 'medium'; in fourteen cases they are thick, and in two of these everted; in five cases they are

intermediate between 'medium' and 'thick.' Generally, it may be said that the lips have a tendency to be thick. The variations in the thickness of the lips are regularly distributed amongst all the tribes, but, as a whole, the lips are slightly thicker in the Gallas than in the others.

*Prominence of the Face.*—If we were to place a Mongolian and an Englishman side by side we would find that in the former the central part of the face is extremely flat, so that if viewed from below (that is, with the head thrown well back) the face, from cheekbone to cheekbone, would appear to be on an even plane, or elevated table-land, broken only by the elevation of the nose in the centre, the cheekbones being well marked and angular. To this condition the term *platy-prosopic* or flat-face is applied. In the Englishman, on the other hand, the face from side to side would resemble the end of an ellipse, with the nose projecting on the highest part of the arch, the cheekbones not being perceptible. To this form the term *pro-prosopic* is applied. In the English and the Mongolians we have the two extreme degrees of variation of this character between which all degrees of elevation or prominence may be found.

Amongst the Abyssinians the platy-prosopic, or flat form of face predominates, particularly among the Amhara tribe. In the other tribes the face varies chiefly from the platy-prosopic to the meso-prosopic or middle form. One case of marked pro-prosopism, or extreme prominence, was observed; two of moderate pro-prosopism; eighteen of meso-prosopism; and twenty-five of well marked platy-prosopism; in two of the latter cases it approached the most extreme form.

#### *Measurements*

The cephalic index varies from 64 to 88, but chiefly centres between 76 and 79, the mean index being 78·5, which places them in the Mesaticephalic group. An examination of the table attached, in which the several measurements and indices have been worked out according to Mr. Francis Galton's method of centennial grades, shows the variations at

the 25th, 50th, and 75th places. The following table shows the variations according to the international division of the cephalic index in the skull :

Hyperdolichocephalic .	65-69.9	1 = 2.2 per cent.
Dolichocephalic . . .	70-74.9	6 = 18.0 " "
Mesaticephalic . . .	75-79.9	26 = 56.5 " "
Brachycephalic . . .	80-84.9	9 = 19.6 " "
Hyperbrachycephalic .	85-89.9	4 = 8.7 " "

The cephalic index is highest in the Amhara tribe, in which it averages 81.4, placing them in the Brachycephalic group. The other groups are Mesaticephalic, the index being in the Tigré 78.2, and in the Galla 79.

*Module of the Head.*—In order to obtain some idea of the volume of the calvaria in different races Schmidt has shown that it may be arrived at by adding the length, breadth, and height together and dividing the sum thus obtained by three, when the quotient will give the required module of the head as he has termed it. In the living subject Topinard has modified this procedure somewhat so as to obtain a similar module, and has two methods by which it may be estimated. The first of these, like that of Schmidt, is obtained by adding the length and breadth measurements of the calvaria used in calculating the cephalic index and the height from the vertex to the tragus, adding fifteen more in males to represent the distance from the tragus to the basion, and dividing the whole sum by three. The other method Topinard adopts is to add the length and breadth of the calvaria together and divide by two.

In the Abyssinians the module of the head is by the first method 158, the smallest head having a module of 145, and the largest of 166, the majority of the figures being between 154 and 163. By the second method the mean module is 165.

*Nasal Index.*—This index shows a good deal of variation, there being several isolated cases beyond each end of the central or most frequently occurring figures. Thus the index is found to vary from 50 up to 120, while the most frequently

occurring indices fall between 63 and 76. The mean index is 68. This places the Abyssinians, in Broca's Leptorhine group for the living (63-69). In two cases the index is high up in the Platyrrhine group, being in one 120 and in the other 115. With respect to the latter I may say that his other characters are markedly negroid; he belonged to the Galla tribe. The former belonged to the Amhara tribe, but his other characters do not show the same negroid affinities. Only one other case, that of a Tigré, falls in Broca's Platyrrhine group, his index being 87.4, but he, likewise, does not show in his other characters the same marked negroid relationships as the first mentioned one. With respect to exceptional measurements and indices it should be remembered that both in making the measurements from which the indices are derived and inscribing them in the register errors are liable to occur, so that too great importance should not be attributed to exceptional cases, and that it is only the general result of all the measurements which should be relied upon where errors in one direction are counteracted by those in the opposite direction.

In the Tigré tribe the nasal index averages 68.1, in the Amhara 74.2, and in the Galla 76.2. The Tigré are therefore Leptorhine, the other two groups are Mesorhine. It is the greater number of observations on the Tigré tribe which brings down the mean index of the whole series.

*Stature.* — The mean stature of the series is 1<sup>m</sup>693 (=66.6 inches) or about 1 c.m. less than that of the British Isles at the same range of age, according to the report of the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association, treated by Mr. Galton's method, and about the same as the mean stature of the industrial classes of this country. The mean stature of mankind, according to Topinard, being 1<sup>m</sup>650, these Abyssinians belong to Topinard's first group above the mean, and almost attain to his tall group (1.700 and upwards). The variations in stature met with in this series of Abyssinians are considerable, the shortest measuring 1.593, and the tallest 1.870 (=62.7 and 73.6 inches). The stature of the majority of the series ranges from 1.610 to 1.740,



especially between 1·670 and 1·720. Between the Amhara and Tigré tribes there is a difference of fully 3 c.m., the former being the taller on the average by that amount. Amongst them occurs the shortest person measured and two exceptionally tall men, but even excluding these three exceptional individuals, their average is fully 2 c.m. above that of the Tigré tribe.

The length of the leg and height of the foot were obtained by subtraction from the kneeling height. Whatever may be the objections to this measurement for the purpose, I have found it to be trustworthy, and to give a reliable means of comparison, since it can be accurately made by persons who would be quite unable to take the direct anatomical measurements of the parts.

In the Abyssinians the leg and height of the foot is 26·5 per cent. of the stature. As the lower limbs are, as previously stated, 49·7 per cent. of the stature, it follows that the portion of the femur from the ischial plane downwards is 23·2 per cent. of the stature.

The length of the foot is 14·5 per cent. of the stature. The proportions of the upper limb to the stature are as follows:—The entire limb from the acromion to the top of the medius finger is 44·9 per cent., the cubit 27·8 per cent., and the hand 11·2 per cent. of the stature. These percentages are from the corrected means of direct measurements of the respective parts, and not got by subtraction of the length of one part from another. The upper arm, or humeral segment, is 17·2 per cent., and the forearm 16·2 per cent. of the stature. The span of the arms has the proportion of 103·7 to the stature.

The proportions of the proximal segments of the limbs to the distal cannot be as accurately compared on the living as in the skeleton, especially in the lower limbs, owing to the impossibility of measuring the actual length of the bones of each segment, but a relative comparison of them may be made. Thus we may compare the length of the forearm with that of the upper arm from the upper level of the olecranon

upwards, and the length of the leg with the portion of the thigh between the knee and ischial plane.

In the Abyssinians the forearm has the proportion to the upper arm of 96 to 100. With respect to the lower extremity I have only the means of comparing the length of leg and height of foot combined. With the thigh portion this gives an index of 114·3, while the corresponding index in ourselves I have found from the reports of the Anthropometric Laboratory of this Association to be 113. An examination of the proportions of each of these segments shows that the difference between this index in ourselves and in the Abyssinians is due to the length of the leg and foot being greater proportionately than the upper or thigh segment.

These being the principal morphological characters shown by the observations of Mr. Bent, we have now to consider what they indicate the affinities of the Abyssinians to be in relation to other races of men.

Professor Keane, in his paper on the 'Ethnology of the Egyptian Sudan,' published in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute, 1884, has given a valuable tabulated scheme of all the Eastern Sudanese and contiguous ethnical groups with their chief subdivisions and geographical positions, which has been of much assistance to me in this matter. The Tigré, the Amhara, and Bogos are classed by Professor Keane as belonging to the Himyaritic branch of Semites, while the Gallas are Hamites, and the Barea are placed among the, as yet, unclassified groups. The Tigré are the predominant race in North Abyssinia, while the Amhara occupy the same position in South Abyssinia, though politically subject to the Tigré. The Bogos inhabit the north-eastern frontier inland from Mūdūn. They have been classed by Reinisch as Hamites, but Professor Keane thinks the evidence is against that being correct, and that they are Semites. He does not mention the Hamasen, but doubtless they are included among the other tribes of the Himyaritic Semites. The Gallas belong to the southern branch of the Hamites.

The Hamites, though remote kinsmen of the Semites as common members of the Caucasian family, he considers to be the true indigenous element in North Africa, while the Semites are recent intruders from Arabia, whose origin he appears to ascribe, chiefly from linguistic evidence, to South Arabia. They inhabit the country east of the Nile, and appear to have been longer settled in the country than the Ishmaelitic branch or Arabs proper who occupy the country west of the Nile, and who have chiefly taken up their abode there since the seventh century. The Barea, whose geographical position is about the middle course of the Mareb and headwaters of the Barka on the north frontier of Abyssinia, he states 'appear to be the true aborigines of Abyssinia.' About the affinities of this latter tribe there appears to be a conflict of evidence. Professor Keane says: 'As described by F. L. James ("Wild Tribes of the Sudán," London, 1883), they seem distinctly negroid. In the preface of that work they are stated to be of a totally different type, much blacker and more closely allied to the pure negro than any of their neighbours. Yet Munziger, one of our best authorities on these fragmentary ethnical groups on the north and north-east frontiers of Abyssinia, asserts that the 'Sogennante Naeger-typus fehlt.'

As we have observations on only one member of the Barea tribe, we will deal with him first. The colour of his skin being sooty-black and his hair black and curly indicate negro characters; the profile of the nose is straight; on the other hand, there is absence of prognathism, and the lips are of medium thickness. His cephalic index is only 64·7, which is the lowest of the whole series, and shows him to be highly dolichocephalic, while the series as a whole is mesaticephalic; the nasal index is 76·7, which places him in Broca's Mesorhine group for the living, while the mean of the series is 68 and that of negroes is 88-101 or Platyrrhine; the index of his forearm to upper arm is 95·2 and of his leg to thigh 130 in the former agreeing with the mean of the series, and in the latter considerably exceeding it, and therefore negro-like. It will thus be seen

that he shows some characters which are negro-like, but others that are not those of typical negroes. Professor Keane, in the paper referred to, says : ' Although grouped as negroes, very few of the Nilotic people present the ideal type of the blacks such as we find it among the Ashantis and other inhabitants of Upper Guinea ; the complexion is, in general, less black, the nose less flat, the lips less protruding, the hair less woolly, dolichocephaly and prognathism less marked—in a word, the salient features of the negro race are less prominent than elsewhere.' It would appear to me that he is of very mixed descent, like most of the tribes of this region ; the negroid element is stronger in him than usual in the northern tribes of Abyssinia, and may even be said to predominate, though greatly modified in some respects. Little reliance should be placed on the characters of this single specimen as indicating the characters of his tribe. As representing, according to Professor Keane and other authorities, the older and true indigenous element of Northern Africa, the Galla tribe of the Hamitic group is of much interest to us, and it is to be regretted that we have only got six records of these characters and measurements, a number totally insufficient from which to make any reliable comparison of their characters with those of the Himyaritic Semites represented by the Tigré, Amhara, Bogos, and Hamasen tribes.

The colour of the skin in the Gallas is darker than that of the Himyaritic tribes, their lips are thicker, the upper jaw is slightly more prognathous, and the nasal index is higher, all of which characters show that the negro element is stronger in them than in the Himyaritic tribes. This is probably to be expected from the geographical position they occupy and from longer contact with the negro. The average cephalic index of the Gallas is very nearly the same as in the Tigré, but lower than in the Amhara, while their average nasal index is higher than that of either the Tigré or Amhara tribes. The average index of the fore-arm to the upper arm is 84·7 in the Gallas and 73·7 in the Amhara, while the length of the leg to that of the thigh averages 104·6 in the

Galla, 111·2 in the Amhara, and it is still higher in the Tigré.

We now pass on to the Himyaritic group, predominating in Northern Abyssinia. In the Tigré, the Amhara, the Hamasen, and the Bogos, we find the colour of the skin, in several cases, shades from the rich chocolate colour, which is the predominant tint, into a dark yellow-brown, or dark olive colour, while those of the Galla shade, as we have just seen, in the other direction towards the sooty-black tint; the lips are somewhat thinner; the cheek-bones are, if anything, more pronounced, especially in the Amhara tribe; and the face may be said to be almost orthognathous—that is to say, without prominence of the jaws. So far the characters of all the Semitic tribes closely agree. In the form of the head there is considerable difference between the Tigré and Amhara tribes, and also in the proportion of the nose, the head being rounder and the nose broader in proportion to its length in the Amhara than in the Tigré. Chiefly on account of the nose being considerably more leptorhine, I am inclined to regard the Tigré as possessing less admixture of negroid blood, and therefore the purer of these two chief Himyaritic groups of Semites of Abyssinia. A most important point to be determined is the relationship they bear to the inhabitants of South Arabia, which, if language is to be relied upon in tracing ethnographical relationships, would appear to be the probable cradle of their origin. This comparison I am quite unable to make, as there does not exist as yet any recorded data for the purpose. Indeed, I feel convinced that we are not likely to be able to unravel the anthropography of North-eastern Africa until such time as ample records have been obtained regarding that of Arabia and the countries north of the Persian Gulf.





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